



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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NATIVITY FAST—SAINT PHILIP'S FAST--PILIPKIVA

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Archbishop Jovan, Bishop Robert, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Cuthbert Jack, Father Elias Warnke, Father Nestor Kowal, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Deacon Dennis Lapushanski, Protopresbyter William Diakiw, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Adam Yonitch, Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Joshua Agosto and his family, Mike Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachele, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, George Rocknage, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Jean Stutchell, Charles & Esther Holupka, Wanda Mefford, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Betty O'Masta, Julie Eiler, Vince Ferro, Michael Pawlyshyn, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—21-year-old with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Woloschak, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciow, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Pete Niederberger, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Diane McDaniel, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, Theodore

Demopoulos, Jillian Bowman, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], Mel & Charlotte Malik, David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Mikaela Kapeluck, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Helen Bozo, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Susan "Billie" Mason, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Donald Griffey, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [child with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Richard Dunst, Michelle, Jamie Gardner, Patrick, Linda Morris, Howard Simpson, Ronald Graham [Evelyn's nephew], Chris, Pastor Ed Bowen, David Hiles, Karen Johnson, Jennifer, Jerry Quinn, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Susan Bertram, Rita McConnell, Gail, Pete Special, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Fred DeNorscia, Sandi Anderson, Donald Uebing, Sabrina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Kareen Milcic, Ella Campbell, Kurt Smith, Tom Hyatt, Kenneth Miller [double-lung transplant], Joan Szymonifka, Jeaneen McCartney Thomson, Peggy Uhring [Eddie Behun's girlfriend], Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko & Wilbur Camback-Andy's sister and uncle, William Lemonakis, Barbara McDougall, Roy & Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Virginia Catherine Pynch, and Daria Masur ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, Steve Sakal, and Homer Paul Kline. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our January babies: Evelyn Burlack on the 1st, Lyndsey Weiser on the 4th, Marcy Jones on the 8th, Brenna Scott on the 29th, and Kristin Scott on the 29th! May God grant them all Many Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Blessed Years! God Bless you all!

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS: All Christians and the others in the Middle East who are suffering during this time of great tragedy and unrest. May God watch over and keep them safe! Lord have mercy!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American service men 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 Debbie Paouncic's class. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP!

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 ask 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 5 Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM
**TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY;
HOLY 10 MARTYRS OF CRETE: THEODULUS, SATURNINUS, EUPORUS,
GELASIUS, EUNICIAN, ZOTICUS, POMPEIUS, AGATHOPUS, BASILIDES, &
EVARISTUS; VENERABLE NIPHON-BISHOP OF CYPRUS; VENERABLE PAUL-
BISHOP OF NEO-CAESAREA**

*******FOLLOWED BY OUR TRADITIONAL PARISH HOLY SUPPER*******

Tone 3

Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

Matthew 1:1-25

Litany in Blessed Memory of Stephen Kuzman & Nicholas Vetosky—Fr. Bob

MONDAY, JANUARY 6 STRICT FAST DAY—NATIVITY EVE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7 Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM
NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST IN THE FLESH

*******FAST FREE PERIOD JANUARY 7-17*******

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12 Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM
**TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY;
SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY; VIRGIN-MARTYR ANYSIA AT THESSALONICA;
MARTYR ZOTICUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE; APOSTLE TIMON THE DEACON;
MARTYR PHILOTERUS OF NICOMEDIA; VENERABLE THEODORA-NUN OF
CAESAREA IN CAPPADOCIA; VENERABLE THEODORA OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

Tone 4

Galatians 1:11-19

Matthew 2:13-23

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18 STRICT FAST DAY—THEOPHANY EVE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19 Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great 10:30 AM
THIRTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**THE HOLY THEOPHANY; BAPTISM OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS
CHRIST**

*******FOLLOWED BY BLESSING OF WATER*******

Tone 5

Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7

Matthew 3:13-17

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 05 JANUARY 2014

**TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THE
NATIVITY; HOLY 10 MARTYRS OF CRETE: THEODULUS,
SATURNINUS, EUPORUS, GELASIUS, EUNICIAN, ZOTICUS, POMEIUS,
AGATHOPUS, BASILIDES, AND EVARISTUS; VENERABLE NIPHON-
BISHOP OF CYPRUS; VENERABLE PAUL-BISHOP OF NEO-CAESAREA**

TROPARION—TONE 3

Let the Heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm!
He has trampled down death by death!
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,
And has granted the world great mercy!

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

KONTAKION—TONE 3

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One!
Leading us from the gates of death.
On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;
With the prophets and patriarchs
They unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 3

READER: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King,
sing praises!

PEOPLE: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our
King, sing praises!

READER: Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of
joy!

PEOPLE: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our
King, sing praises!

READER: Sing praises to our God, sing praises!

PEOPLE: Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 3

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to shame!

Be Thou a God of protection for me, a house of refuge, in order to save me!

PERMANENT CONFERENCE OF UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX HIERARCHS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF UKRAINE

Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ
2013/2014

To the Venerable Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church beyond the Borders of Ukraine and to our Brothers and Sisters of the Faith in Ukraine:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

These words were spoken long ago to people living in anxiety, fear, and despair, people feeling bereft of security, safety and any sense of God's presence. We hear them early on Christmas, forgetting that they were first spoken hundreds of years before the birth we celebrate. Human beings throughout our planet still yearn to know that a more gracious and divine reality is active and evident in our lives.

The Nativity, or as it is often referred identified—Christmas—is here! The season has come and with it many joyous moments. What, however, is the real meaning of the Nativity? Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, dinners with family and friends, snow in the yard, stockings hanging in the living room, and greetings of "Merry Christmas" to those who pass us in the streets? Is this really what the Nativity is? For many people, the Nativity Feast is a time of sorrow. They do not have the money necessary to buy gifts for their children, family and friends. Many are saddened at Christmas time when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to come home to join in the festivities. A turkey or ham dinner may be only a wish and not a possible reality for some.

Yet, the Nativity Feast can be a season of great joy, especially if we remember that through it God showing His great Love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into

the world to be incarnate – to become one of us. His nativity brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary child. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before. The star stopped over the cave in Bethlehem to mark the way for those who were searching for this special child.

The Nativity is also a season for reflection: What is it about Christmas that draws people together? Why do we go to grandma's house for a big dinner or visit family and friends who we see but once a year to exchange presents? Why do we attend one Christmas party after another with people we don't really know? Whatever the reason, it should cause us to reflect deeply about the fact that no one wants to be alone at Christmas. Christmas has become a time for gift giving. Gifts are a sign of the love and friendship people have for one another. Gift giving, however, and perhaps the expectation of gifts can get out of hand. The desire for the latest fashion or gadget can become more important than the friendship a gift symbolizes. Sometimes people judge friendship more by the value of the gifts they are given rather than the value of the person who gives them – a dangerous path to tread – a path which can lead to the breaking down of relationships and the cause of loneliness when we want most to not be alone.

Jesus Christ comes as Savior for all, not just for a select few. His Nativity is God's proclamation that we all matter and that we belong to Him and to one another. The message of His Nativity was first announced to shepherds – people living on the margins of society and often not trusted by others. The angels proclaimed: "Glory to God on High and peace and good will amongst all people" enabling strangers to become friends and enemies to be reconciled. In that journey towards friendship and the recognition of our common humanity, we discover a freedom which enables us to live in peace with one another and to have respect for every individual and every culture.

Our Savior teaches us that mercy, forgiveness, joy, peace and justice, are all possible realities and not to be found only in our dreams. They are possible realities because it is Christ, born in Bethlehem, who is true mercy, forgiveness, joy, peace and justice. These are the real gifts of Christmas, presented abundantly to us by the One, Whose humble nativity we joyfully

celebrate. Our prayer for you, for your families, for our parish communities and for our entire world is that these gifts are received with pure hearts, minds and souls and that you will unwrap and quickly share them with others—perhaps even those you may not know—so they too can discover what it truly means to be “home for Christmas”. The most incredible thing is that when we share these gifts – they are replaced almost more quickly than we can give them away.

When you are on your way to Christmas dinner, or to visit family and friends, or to exchange gifts, or to attend another Christmas party, or to church to offer praise and gratitude to God on one of the Nativity Holy Days, pray for everyone you greet. Think about how they, through those prayers, might come to know what you already believe: that God is at home with us and we are to be at home with him, not in a dream, but in reality through the love of Jesus Christ. May we always live as though we truly hold this to be true all the days of our life.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

The Nativity of Christ 2013/2014

With Archpastoral Blessings,

+ YURIJ,

Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ ANTONY,

Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and the Diaspora

+ IOAN,

Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Diaspora

+ JEREMIAH,

Archbishop of the South American Eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

+ ILARION,

Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ ANDRIY,

Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ DANIEL,

Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

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Prot. No. 1109

Patriarchal Encyclical for Christmas

+ BARTHOLOMEW

By God's Mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch
To the Plenitude of the Church:

Grace, mercy, and peace from the Savior Christ, born in Bethlehem
Beloved brothers and sisters, children in the Lord,

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." (Isaiah 9.5)

Many centuries ago, the Prophet foresaw and announced with enthusiasm and joy the birth of the child Jesus from the ever-Virgin Mary. Naturally, even then, there was no period of census by Augustus Caesar, no place to stay for the safety of the Holy Virgin who was carrying a child by the Holy Spirit. So the holy Joseph as her betrothed and protector was obliged to lead her to a cave, a manger with animals, "in order to give birth to a child."

Heaven and earth received them, offering thanks to their Creator: "The angels offered the hymn; the heavens a star; the wise men gifts; the shepherds a miracle; the earth a cave; the desert a manger; and we the Mother Virgin." The shepherds were keeping watch over their flock, protecting them throughout the night, while the angels were witnessing the Mystery in ecstasy, singing hymns to God. (From Vespers of the Nativity)

The sweetness of the Holy Night of Christmas once again embraces the world. And in the midst of human trial and pain, of unending crises, of passion and enmity, of concern and despair, it presents the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word as a genuine and timely solution. For He descended as dew in a field of cotton inside the womb of the ever-Virgin Mary in order to give rise to righteousness and much peace. (See Ps. 71.7)

In the silence and peace of that sacred night of Christmas, Jesus Christ – being without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, immaterial, ever existing and the same – enters the drama of history bearing flesh, being insignificant, simple, poor and unknown. At the same time, he comes as a "wonderful, counselor, almighty, prince of peace, everlasting father." (Is. 9.6) Indeed, he comes as a human being, born of a Virgin Mother, to solve the complexity of sin and grant resolution to the impasse of life's anxiety through His grace and mercy, while providing destiny, value, content, as well as an exemplary ethos and model for the human adventure.

The Lord assumed and sanctified all of human nature. The pre-eternal God condescended to become for us an embryo and be borne inside the womb of the Theotokos. In so doing, He both honored human life from its earliest stage and taught us respect toward humankind from its earliest conception. The Creator of all accepted to be born as an infant and be

nurtured by a Virgin. In so doing, He honored both virginity and motherhood, spiritual and natural. This is why St. Gregory the Theologian exhorts: "O women, be as virgins, so that you may become mothers of Christ." (Homily XXXVIII on Epiphany, PG36.313A)

So the Lord appointed the marriage of male and female in the blessed family. The institution of Christian family constitutes the cell of life and an incubator for the spiritual and physical health and development of children. Therefore, the manifold support of the institution of the family comprises the obligation of the Church and responsibility of leadership in every country.

In order for a child to be raised in a healthy and natural way, there needs to be a family where man and woman live in harmony as one body, one flesh, and one soul, submitting to one another.

We are certain that all spiritual and ecclesiastical, much like the vigilant shepherds of old, but also the leaders of our world, know and accept this divine truth and reality, which we once again proclaim from the Ecumenical Patriarchate during this Christmas period. We must all encourage the creation and function of natural families, which can produce citizens that are spiritually healthy and joyful, filled with sentiments of security, based on the feeling of safety provided by a strong and protective father as well as a nurturing and loving mother. We need families where God might find rest. We invite and urge the entire plenitude of our holy Orthodox Church to live in a manner that is worthy of their calling and do everything that is possible to support the institution of marriage.

Brothers and sisters, "the night is far gone; the day is at hand." (Rom. 6.12) The shepherds are already headed toward Bethlehem in order to proclaim the miracle. They are inviting us to follow them "like other star-gazing wise men filled with joy" (From the Christmas Troparion of the 4th Ode), bringing "worthy gifts" "such as fine gold to the King of ages, incense to the God of all, and myrrh to the immortal that lay dead for three days." (Anatolios, Vespereal Hymn at Christmas) That is to say, the gifts of love and our faith, which test us as Christians, especially as Orthodox Christians, in the ethos and tradition of the family, the Fathers, and the Church, which has always practiced the Orthodox way through the centuries and to this day holds together our blessed society, whose cell for sacred life and growth is the family.

Beloved brothers and sisters, children in Christ,
2013 years have passed since the birth of Christ in the flesh
2013 years have passed and, like then, Christ continues to be
persecuted in the person of the weak by Herod and all kinds of
contemporary Herods

2013 years have passed and Jesus is persecuted in the person of
Christians in Syria and elsewhere

2013 years have passed and Christ still flees like a refugee not only in
Egypt, but also in the Lebanon, Europe, America and elsewhere, seeking
security in an insecure world

2013 years have passed and the child Jesus remains imprisoned with
the two hierarchs in Syria, Paul (Yazigi) and Youhanna (Ibrahim), as well as
the Orthodox nuns and many other known and unknown Christians

2013 years have passed and Christ is crucified with those who are
tortured and killed in order not to betray their faith in Him

2013 years have passed and Jesus is daily put to death in the person
of thousands of embryos, whose parents prevent from being born

2013 years have passed and Christ is mocked and ridiculed in the
person of unfortunate children, who experience the crisis of the family,
destitution and poverty.

It is this human pain, sorrow and affliction that our Lord came and
once more comes to assume during this Christmas season. After all, He
said: "As you have done to one of these, the least of my brothers and
sisters," you have done to me." (Matt. 25.40-41) It is for these that He was
born of a Virgin, for these that He became human, for these that He
suffered, was crucified and arose from the dead. That is to say: for all of us.
Thus, let each of us lift up our personal cross in order to find grace and
mercy when we seek His assistance. Then, the born Emmanuel, our Savior
and Lord, will "be with us." Amen.

Christmas 2013
+ Bartholomew of Constantinople
Your fervent supplicant before God

God is With Us: Entering the Incarnation with Christ

Nativity of the Lord

Amid the hustle and bustle of the Christmas Season and the music, merriment, and merchandizing which has already begun, we often forget just how important Christ's birth is for each and every person born on earth. This is a time to think about and remember the holy events that led up to and were fulfilled when the living and eternal God revealed Himself fully in a form and way that we can see, touch, hold, and love, for God is now truly with us!

"For unto a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end..." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

It is hard to imagine the vast infinite, or truly perfect love, or unchanging and unconditioned personal commitment until death and beyond, or transcendent and personal care on every level that we can intuit or think. Actually it is really impossible to grasp with our minds that which is beyond our imperfect human nature and thought. Knowing this, the Infinite God of Love reached across the Universe to touch each of us in a way that we can perceive, even if we can't fully understand. God Who seemed so far away (and if we wander into unawareness even today can still seem so) is immediately and continuously approachable. He took a form in time so we can relate to Him with our senses, with our minds, and with our hearts.

He is here--right here and right now. Let us reach out now back to Him, and then touch Him, love Him, and thank Him that He is with us. O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.."
(Matt. 1:23)

The Monks of St. Isaac of Syria Skete
and the Nuns of the Convent of St. Silouan
and the Faithful of St. Nicholas Church
and the Staff of Orthodox Byzantine Icons and St. Isaac's Bookstore

(Rublev) - F41



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Protocol Number 187/13

December 25, 2013—The Nativity of Christ

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.... (Isaiah 9:6)

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the culmination of this blessed season with the glorious celebration of the Nativity of Christ, we give thanksgiving and praise to God for His abundant grace and for His superb gift of becoming one of us through His Incarnation. This is a feast of joy and light. It is a jubilation on a day and a moment when God because of His great love for us took our humanity upon Himself. Through our Lord's conception and birth, He entered our human condition. He assumed the flesh and blood that He created. He became man so that He might offer to us power over sin and death and the gift of total liberation from evil.

On this day we celebrate God's gift to us and to all of humanity and creation. This gift was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a child is given" (Isaiah 9:6). Through His gift, He offers us hope. In the darkness, the brilliant light of promise illumines a path to God through Christ. In our struggle against sin and the many challenges of life, He reveals to us how we can restore our communion with Him, and assures us that we will have the strength to complete our journey of faith. Through the Incarnation of Christ, we are shown the way to true and eternal life, and we become witnesses of the power of God to redeem what He created and loves.

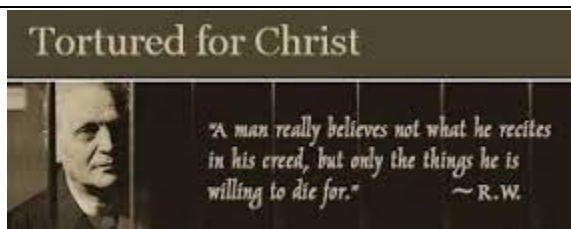
We celebrate this Feast and this wondrous gift at a time when many throughout our world are in need of compassion and hope. We have seen massive destruction and loss due to recent natural disasters. We have witnessed the tragedy of violence within our communities and in nations around the world. We are acutely aware of the struggles of our brothers and sisters in Greece and Cyprus and in other places where economic challenges have burdened many. We are conscious of the ordeals of our

Ecumenical Patriarchate due to severe restrictions on true religious freedom. We see around us the consequences when human dignity is devalued and life is exploited.

It is into the midst of the plight of humanity and these challenges that we carry the message of this Feast: For unto us a Child is born and unto us a Son is given! We share a Gospel of hope and promise. Christ has become man, and this unique gift to us has become the spiritual foundation for our offering to others in need. In gratitude to Him, in our compassion for our fellow human beings, and as a witness of the greatest gift of all, we offer to those who have lost everything, who carry the burden of despair, who suffer under conditions they cannot control or change, who have been victims of the abuse of others. They need to hear and see that God has given Himself to them, that His grace is revealed through Christ so that they might have hope and true life.

On this holy and blessed Feast of the Nativity of Christ, may our hearts be filled with joy as we receive and celebrate the gift of God and the gift of hope and life. May we also renew our commitment to share this gift with everyone. Let us give from our abundance so that others receive care and healing. Let us respond to the needs of those around us and throughout the world, so that the witness of God's grace may shine in every place. And may our good and gracious God bless you and your families as you share in fellowship and prayer on this beautiful and sacred day.

With paternal love in Christ,
†DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America



An Undying Love

When I was in jail I fell very, very ill. I had tuberculosis of the whole surface of both lungs, and four vertebrae were attacked by tuberculosis. I also had intestinal tuberculosis, diabetes, heart failure, jaundice, and other sicknesses I can't even remember. I was near to death.

At my right hand was a priest by the name of Iscu. He was abbot of a monastery. This man, perhaps in his forties, had been so tortured he was

near to death. But his face was serene. He spoke about his hope of heaven, about his love of Christ, about his faith. He radiated joy.

On my left side was the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest almost to death. He had been arrested by his own comrades. Don't believe the newspapers when they say that the Communists only hate Christians or Jews—it's not true. They simply hate. They hate everybody. They hate Jews, they hate Christians, they hate anti-Semites, they hate anti-Christians, they hate everybody. One Communist hates the other Communist. They quarrel among themselves, and when they quarrel one Communist with the other, they put the other one in jail and torture him just like a Christian, and they beat him.

And so it happened that the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest nearly to death had been tortured nearly to death by his comrades. And he was dying near me. His soul was in agony.

During the night he would awaken me, saying, "Pastor, please pray for me. I can't die, I have committed such terrible crimes."

Then I saw a miracle. I saw the agonized priest calling two other prisoners. And leaning on their shoulders, slowly, slowly he walked past my bed, sat on the bedside of this murderer, and caressed his head—I will never forget this gesture. I watched a murdered man caressing his murderer! That is love—he found a caress for him.

The priest said to the man, "You are young; you did not know what you were doing. I love you with all my heart." But he did not just say the words. You can say "love," and it's just a word of four letters. But he really *loved*. "I love you with all my heart."

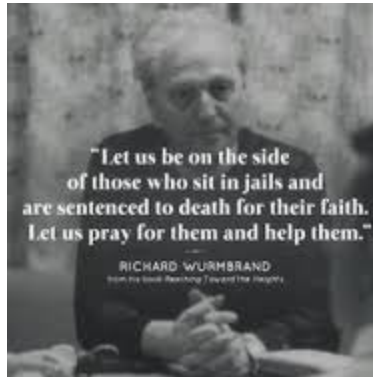
Then he went on, "If I who am a sinner can love you so much, imagine Christ, who is Love Incarnate, how much He loves you! And all the Christians whom you have tortured, know that they forgive you, they love you, and Christ loves you. He wishes you to be saved much more than you wish to be saved. You wonder if your sins can be forgiven. He wishes to forgive your sins more than you wish your sins to be forgiven. He desires for you to be with Him in heaven much more than you wish to be in heaven with Him. He is Love. You only need to turn to Him and repent."

In this prison cell in which there was no possibility of privacy, I overheard the confession of the murderer to the murdered. Life is more thrilling than a novel—no novelist has ever written such a thing. The murdered—near to death—received the confession of the murderer. The murdered gave absolution to his murderer.

They prayed together, embraced each other, and the priest went back to his bed. Both men died that same night. It was a Christmas Eve. But it was not a Christmas Eve in which we simply remembered that two

thousand years ago Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It was a Christmas Eve during which Jesus was born in the heart of a Communist murderer.

These are things which I have seen with my own eyes.



To His Grace, our Bishop Daniel, the Consistory, the Pittsburgh Deanery, all of our Orthodox brothers and sisters, and to our loving and wonderful Holy Ghost Parish family:

We wish each of you the most peaceful, prayerful, and blessed Nativity Ever! Christ IS Born! Glorify Him!

We greet you with these words that God IS With US today as he was with the shepherds, sheep, and the Wise Men over two millennia ago. We wish you His Love and Grace—that they fill your heart and soul to the point where you cannot contain them—you MUST share them or you will explode! We wish you His Peace—that you can put aside all earthly cares and troubles and truly enjoy the great moment at hand. S’Nami Boh—Emmanuel—God IS WITH US always—through joy and sorrow, through darkness and light, through bad and good...we just need to open our eyes and ears to him. As God manifests His Love to us, let us truly love each other as He loves us...without any reservations or qualifications—just LOVE!

On behalf of the parish board and officers, the sisterhood, our parish family, and our own family, we wish you a Most Blessed Nativity—a Very Merry Christmas! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

The entire Holy Ghost Parish Family

Fr. Bob, Pani Gina, Alexander, Matthew, and Stancy [my mom]