



## Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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# NATIVITY FAST

**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 John Harvey, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father Nestor Kowal, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Protopresbyter William Diakiw, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Adam Yonitch, Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Father Paisius McGrath, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, 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, Esther Holupka, Wanda Mefford, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Betty O'Masta, Julie Eiler, 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 Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Pete Niederberger, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaele Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, 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, Patrick, Linda Morris, Howard Simpson, Chris, Pastor Ed Bowen, David Hiles, Karen Johnson, Jennifer, Jerry Quinn, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Fred DeNorscia, Sandi Anderson, Donald Uebing, Sabrina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Barbara McDougall, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Virginia Catherine Pynch, Susan Lucas, Manny Lopez, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Nancy Heinbaugh, Mira Filipovic, Lynn, Jacqueline, Irma Opacic, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Jeff Jones, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Donna Cacioppo [Evelyn's niece], Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Stella Rossi, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Manny "Lazarus" Lopez, Glenn & Lucas Burlack, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Evelyn Felouzis, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Millie Koss Good, Mary Haraczy, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Brenda Jamison, and Mother Ana. ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, Steve Sakal, and Homer Paul Kline. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

**REMINDER: We will celebrate our Nativity Eve Holy Supper—Sviati Vechir—after our service on Sunday, January 3, 2016. This will be a pot-luck FASTING meal. Please prepare a dish to share with about 20 people—Martha Persico has kindly volunteered to coordinate the food—please let her know what dish you will bring or if you have any questions.**

**Please remember in your prayers—our dear 'Little Father' Emilian,** who returned to Romania to undergo surgery for back pain. This particular procedure is not offered here in the United States. He asked for our prayers and expressed his thanks for the love and fellowship he has shared with the Holy Ghost Parish Family. He said he looks forward to returning to

us pain-free at some time in the future...may God watch over him and heal him...Fr. Bob

**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!

**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, DECEMBER 13 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 10:30 AM  
28<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; HOLY AND ALL-PRAISED APOSTLE ANDREW  
THE FIRST-CALLED; SAINT FRUMENTIUS-ARCHBISHOP OF ABYSSINIA**

*Tone 3*

Colossians 1;12-8; 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

Luke 13:10-17; John 1:35-51

***Litany in Blessed Memory of Victor & Walter Burlack—Evelyn & Family***

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20 NO SERVICE IN SLICKVILLE  
29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SAINT AMBROSE-BISHOP OF MILAN; MARTYR  
ATHENODORUS OF MESOPOTAMIA; VENERABLE PAUL THE OBEDIENT &  
VENERABLE JOHN THE FASTER OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA**

*Tone 4*

Colossians 3:12-16

Luke 17:12-19

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27 OBEDNITZA DOWNSTAIRS IN CHURCH HALL 10:30 AM  
30<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; MARTYRS THYRSUS, LEUCIUS, &  
CALLINICUS; MARTYRS APPOLONIUS, PHILEMON, ARAIANUS, & THEOCTYCHUS  
OF ALEXANDRIA**

*Tone 5*  
Colossians 3:4-11  
Luke 4:16-24

## **BULLETIN INSERT FOR 13 DECEMBER 2015**

**27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; AFTERFEAST OF THE ENTRY OF  
THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS; SAINT AMPHILOCHIUS-BISHOP OF  
ICONIUM; SAINT GREGORY-BISHOP OF AGRENTUM; SAINT  
SISINIUS THE CONFESSOR-BISHOP OF CYZICUS; MARTAHRY  
THEODORE OF ANTIOCH**

### **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!



What was the typical day like of St. John of Kronstadt (one of my favorite saints) He would rise at 3 AM and prepare himself for divine services. He would spend some time walking around his yard, silently saying his prayers. Around 4 AM he would set out for the cathedral, for Matins. A crowd of pilgrims would be waiting at the gates of his house. Batiushka was unable to speak to almost anyone individually — all were limited to receiving his blessings; they were happy even with this; they caught his hand so as to kiss it, they tried to touch his garments, to catch the tender gaze of St. John upon themselves. At the cathedral, Batiushka would be met Saint John with his wife Elizabeth (on the right), surrounded by family and friends by a crowd of beggars, to whom he gave alms in accordance with a procedure he had established. At Matins, St. John read the canon, and then, without leaving the cathedral, began the Liturgy. The cathedral would be full and there would be so many communicants that the services would last until noon. During the services, letters and telegrams received would be brought to Batiushka in the altar, and he would pray for the senders. Surrounded by thousands of the faithful, he would walk out of the cathedral, to set out immediately for Petersburg, in response to countless requests from the sick, returning not before midnight, and having time to rest only on the train from the capital to Oranienbaum — a period of one hour! (From [holytrinitymission.org](http://holytrinitymission.org))

### **Pope's message to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I**

Vatican City, 30 November 2015 (VIS) – As is customary on the feast day of St. Andrew, patron of the ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople, a Holy See delegation led by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, travelled to Istanbul to participate in the celebration. The Holy See and the Patriarchate exchange regular annual visits for the feast days of their respective patrons: the Patriarchate sends a delegation to Rome on 29 June, the feast day of the apostles Sts. Peter and Paul, every year.

The delegation participated in the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Patriarch Bartholomaios I in the patriarchal church of St. George of Phanar, then met with

the synodal commission which oversees relations with the Catholic Church, and delivered a message from the Holy Father, read at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

In the text, Francis recalls in particular the fiftieth anniversary of the of the Joint Catholic-Orthodox Declaration of Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I which expressed the decision to eliminate the mutual excommunications of 1054. "The memory of the mutual sentences of excommunication, together with the offensive words, groundless reproaches, and reprehensible gestures on both sides, which accompanied the sad events of this period, represented for many centuries an obstacle to rapprochement in charity between Catholics and Orthodox. Attentive to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed to the Father on the eve of his Passion that his disciples 'may be one', Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I consigned these painful memories to oblivion. Since then, the logic of antagonism, mistrust and hostility that had been symbolised by the mutual excommunications has been replaced by the logic of love and brotherhood, represented by our fraternal embrace.

"While not all differences between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches were brought to an end, there now existed the conditions necessary to journey towards re-establishing the 'full communion of faith, fraternal accord and sacramental life which existed among them during the first thousand years of the life of the Church'. Having restored a relationship of love and fraternity, in a spirit of mutual trust, respect and charity, there is no longer any impediment to Eucharistic communion which cannot be overcome through prayer, the purification of hearts, dialogue and the affirmation of truth. Indeed, where there is love in the life of the Church, its source and fulfilment is always to be found in Eucharistic love. So too the symbol of the fraternal embrace finds its most profound truth in the embrace of peace exchanged in the Eucharistic celebration.

"In order to progress on our journey towards the full communion for which we long, we need continually to draw inspiration from the gesture of reconciliation and peace by our venerable predecessors Paul VI and Athenagoras I. At all levels and in every context of Church life, relations between Catholics and Orthodox must increasingly reflect the logic of love that leaves no room for the spirit of rivalry. Theological dialogue itself, sustained by mutual charity, must continue to examine carefully the questions which divide us, aiming always at deepening our shared understanding of revealed truth. Motivated by God's love, we must together offer the world a credible and effective witness to Christ's message of reconciliation and salvation.

"The world today has great need of reconciliation, particularly in light of so much blood which has been shed in recent terrorist attacks. May we accompany the victims with our prayers, and renew our commitment to lasting peace by

promoting dialogue between religious traditions, for 'indifference and mutual ignorance can only lead to mistrust and unfortunately even conflict'.

"I wish to express my deep appreciation for Your Holiness' fervent commitment to the critical issue of care for creation, for which your sensitivity and awareness is an exemplary witness for Catholics. I believe that it is a hopeful sign for Catholics and Orthodox that we now celebrate together an annual Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on 1 September, following the long-standing practice of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In this regard, I assure you of my prayers for the important international meeting on the environment to be held in Paris at which you will participate.

"Your Holiness, it is incumbent upon humanity to rediscover the mystery of mercy, 'the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness'. For this reason I have called for an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, a favourable time to contemplate the Father's mercy revealed fully in his Son, Jesus Christ, and to become ourselves an effective sign of God's love through our mutual pardon and works of mercy. It is providential that the anniversary of that historic Joint Catholic-Orthodox Declaration concerning the removal of the excommunications of 1054 occurs on the eve of the Year of Mercy. Following Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I, Catholics and Orthodox today must ask pardon of God and one another for divisions that Christians have brought about in the Body of Christ. I ask you and all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to pray that this Extraordinary Jubilee may bear the spiritual fruits for which we yearn. I willingly assure you of my prayers for the events that your Church will celebrate in the year to come, especially the Pan-Orthodox Great Synod. May this important occasion for all the Orthodox Churches be a source of abundant blessings for the life of the Church", concluded the Holy Father.

### **Questions and Answers About the Nativity Fast**

Fasting is not difficult if we live in an Orthodox family. In fact the external act of fasting from animal products is not difficult, for this is part of our daily liturgical life. On a spiritual level it is more challenging, especially with the demands that are made on us at this time of the year. I am referring to our 'obligation' to join in office parties or socialize with non-Orthodox friends. For those of us whose immediate family is not Orthodox, this poses a challenge on the physical level as well. *Orthodoxy and the World | 08 December 2009*

#### **"We Must not Fast Hypocritically"**

**Protopresbyter Serafim Gascoigne** from the Holy Protection of the Theotokos Orthodox Church, Seattle, Washington, and **Priest Sergei Sveshnikov**, rector of

*the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russian church in Mulino, Oregon, answer Pravmir's questions about the Nativity Fast and the Nativity celebration.*



**Pravmir: *The Orthodox Church prepares the faithful for the Nativity of the Lord by the 40-days fasting period. The secular world has its own spirit of Christmas preparation: parties, presents, Christmas markets, early decorated stores... How not to be involved by the secular pre-celebration of Christmas and to keep the fast not only in food, but in spirit as well?***

**Fr. Sergei Sveshnikov:** First of all, I would warn against building too high a partition between the "Christian world" and the "secular world." In the true sense of the word, there is no such thing as the secular world; there is only one world—that which was created by God and corrupted by sin. Trying to "flee from the world" may be a lofty aspiration indeed, but one that in its purest form would require us to abandon our employment, family, relationships, oh, and probably the internet as well. Yet it is unthinkable that the Church would want all of us to become monastic hermits—Christians would simply die out within a generation or two!

Unlike the somber Great Lent, which is a preparation for the Passion Week, the Nativity Fast is full of joy, as we prepare for God Himself to enter this sinful "secular world," and to dwell among us—not only among the Essenes, the Nazarites, and other desert dwellers—but among us also. Like a pregnant woman who knows what the result of her labors will be and smiles in anticipation, the Church cannot but know what joy awaits us at the end of the Nativity Fast and rejoices in anticipation of God's love and abundant mercy. Christ tells us not to look dismal when we fast, but to anoint our heads and wash our faces (Matt. 6:16-17), that is to say, to act in normal ways expected of us in our society. There is nothing inherently sinful in parties or presents. That is not to say that gluttony or addiction to shopping are not sinful diseases—that they are in all seasons—Advent and any other; and if we feel that we should not be doing something during Advent, we probably should not be doing that before or after the fast either. Having said that, I certainly realize that many people experience what is called "peer pressure" as our friends, classmates, or coworkers invite us to their Christmas parties where non-fasting dishes and alcoholic beverages are served on days when we cannot have them.

Thankfully, in America it is very much acceptable to be different. Most people actually understand and respect their friends' dietary preferences. Sometimes,



Orthodox Christians excuse their own desire to break the fast by citing some story from the life of some ascetic who broke his fast in order not to offend the people who offered him food. These Christians usually forget that the said ascetic led a very strict life before the incident, and that he fasted for forty days after tasting of the chicken which was brought to him by some poor people who gave him the last of what they had. Our situation is incomparably different. We have a lot of control over what is served at a party: we can ask the hosts ahead of time to prepare certain fasting dishes, we can bring some dishes to the party, or we can respectfully and discreetly excuse ourselves and not go to the party at all. In most cases, people will understand and respect our choices in the same way that we understand and respect theirs.

***– What would you advise those who face the problem of celebrating two Nativities (in a case where one spouse is a non-Orthodox or where one member of a family converted to Orthodoxy and attends a parish which follows the Old Calendar)?***

– If our spouse celebrates the Nativity of Christ according to the Gregorian calendar (I shall not address the “New Julian” conundrum here), we should show to them our utmost love and respect and celebrate with them. Of course, we do so without breaking our fast; but a true celebration can be equally joyful even without our eating a piece of duck or ham. And if we show acceptance of their customs, traditions, and beliefs, our loved ones will be likely to accept ours. In any case, what we must avoid is any division in the family. “No house divided against itself will stand” (Matt. 12:25), and if we want to have a strong family, we must learn to respect each other, including each other’s choices in celebrating the Nativity.

***– How to deal with the problem of two dates of celebrating of the Nativity in the Orthodox Church, if one follows one calendar but attends the nearest parish who follows another?***

– This is a very difficult and painful issue. I do not know whether Christ was born on December 25, January 7, or some other day, but I think that it is very important that the Church is united. Adopting a new calendar not recognized by the fullness of the Orthodox Church has clearly caused divisions and strife within the Church. As members in the Body of Christ, we must see divisions and separations as one of the greatest evils that can be endured only in cases of great necessity. And I do not feel that the calendar issue presents such a necessity. For me, this statement goes both ways: those who instigated the calendar reform had no right to do that, unless the entire Church was in agreement; but in the same way, we have no right to separate ourselves from our brothers and sisters in Christ over the calendar issue.

Liturgically, however, a person cannot celebrate two Nativities in one year any more than he can celebrate two Liturgies in one day. We can certainly be present at both services (although, I would strongly advise against that), but we can fully participate only in one. In other words, if we choose to attend a new-calendar parish, we should celebrate Church feasts and fasts according to the customs of our chosen parish. If we worship with them in the same church, commune with them from the same Cup, ask them to baptize our children, but think that their Nativity is not the "correct" one because the "correct" one is two weeks later, then we are driving a wedge between ourselves and the Church and are guilty of schism. We can choose to make matters very complicated when clergy of different jurisdictions concelebrate together, but for most lay people, the principle of Orthodox unity should be primary to any astronomical, historical, cultural, or any other arguments presented by proponents and opponents of the New Calendar.



***Fr. Seraphim's answer to the above mentioned questions:***

I believe the 'doors of Heaven' are wide open during this season of preparation for the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This time of year carries with it, special blessings, especially if we are obedient to the Holy Tradition of the Church. Through physical and spiritual fasting, we make ourselves receptive to the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that when we come to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord, it will be for us, not simply a commemoration but a spiritual event in which we step out of time and into the Eternal Now. We too shall be with shepherds in Bethlehem.

Fasting is not difficult if we live in an Orthodox family. In fact the external act of fasting from animal products is not difficult, for this is part of our daily liturgical life. On a spiritual level it is more challenging, especially with the demands that are made on us at this time of the year. I am referring to our 'obligation' to join in office parties or socialize with non-Orthodox friends. For those of us whose immediate family is not Orthodox, this poses a challenge on the physical level as well.

When I worked for a corporation, I was expected to attend team pizza-parties, which always took place on a Friday. At these parties I fasted, but nevertheless joined in the fun with my colleagues. After awhile, out of respect to me as an Orthodox priest, I was subsequently not required to attend these functions. The

same consideration applied to Muslims, vegan vegetarians and anybody who had something 'religious' going for them.

The challenge we as Orthodox Christians face, is how do we keep this time of the year holy and pure? Over the years, Christmas has become more and more, a secular celebration. It is the time to get together with family and friends, not necessarily to celebrate Christ's birth according to the civil calendar, but to celebrate being together. In order not to alienate ourselves from others but at the same time to observe the fast, I recommend attending functions with family and colleagues, but keeping the physical fast. If I was a diabetic or had a heart condition I would most likely be on a diet. My loved ones would not expect me to kill my body by breaking my diet. No one would expect me to eat turkey if I was a practicing vegan. There is always a need to share our love with others, but we do not necessarily have to compromise our faith. I am reminded at this time of the late Countess Orlova, a courtier who was also a secret nun. At the end of a day of banquets and receptions, she would retire to her room and remove her silk dress and fine jewelry, putting on her monastic clothes and spending the night in prayer. There is also the story of a desert father who never refused hospitality that was offered to him. However when he returned to his cell, he would fast extra days, according to the amount he had eaten and drunk. His spiritual disciple complained to a generous host that, the old man would kill himself with fasting and begged the host not to give him too much.

*This is a wonderful time of year to make the season of peace and goodwill a truly Orthodox experience, for ourselves and for those around us.*

"One need not look at the money that one gives to beggars, but rather one should mix up the money in one's pocket and give only what the hand removes from the pocket. The hand will draw out whatever God's providence ordains", said St. Philaret the Almsgiver (from Prologue).

**A short note from Father Bob:** Eighteen years ago today I was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Constantine, of Blessed Memory, to serve the God-loving parish of the Holy Ghost in Slickville, PA. I have loved and enjoyed every second of my service here and want to thank everyone for their help,

love, and especially prayers during that time. I thank God that He has sent me here...God Bless you all!