



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

714 Westmoreland Avenue

PO Box 3

Slickville, PA 15684-0003

[724] 468-5581

www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org

Very Rev. Father Robert Popichak, Pastor

23 Station Street

Carnegie, PA 15106-3014

[412] 279-5640 home

[412] 956-6626 cell

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, Gaelle 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, 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, Mike Mangan, and Jackie Crimbchin. 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, Demetra on the 4th, Marcy Jones on the 8th, Brenna Scott on the 29th, Kristin Tkacik Scott on the 29th, and Kayla Weiser on the 29th. May God grant them all Many Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Blessed Years! M'nohaya Lita! God Bless!

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, JANUARY 03 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 10:30 AM
31ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY; FOREFEAST
OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST; VIRGIN-MARTYR JULIANA AND WITH HER 500
MEN & 130 WOMEN; MARTYR THEOMISTOCLES OF MYRA IN LYCIA
*****HOLY SUPPER DOWNSTAIRS AFTER SERVICES*******

Tone 6

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

Matthew 1:1-25

***Litany in Blessed Memory of Stephen Kuzman, Timothy Stuchell, Nicholas
Vetosky, Robert Rohal, & Gary Atutes—Fr. Bob***

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 06 NATIVITY EVE—STRICT FAST DAY

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 07 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 10:30 AM
THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

Galatians 4:4-7

Matthew 2:1-12

January 07 through January 18 is a FAST FREE PERIOD!!!

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 10 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 10:30 AM
32ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY; AFTERFEAST OF
THE NATIVITY; HOLY RIGHTEOUS DAVID THE KING; JAMES THE BROTHER OF
THE LORD; 20,000 MARTYRS OF NICOMEDIA INCLUDING GLYCERIUS, ZENO,
THEOPHILUS, & OTHERS; APOSTLE NICANOR THE DEACON**

Tone 7

Galatians 1:11-19

Matthew 2:13-23

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 17 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 10:30 AM
33RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY; SYNAXIS OF
THE 70 APOSTLES; VENERABLE THEOCTISTUS-ABBOT AT CUOMO IN SICILY;
MARTYR ZOSIMAS THE HERMIT & MARTYR ATHANASIUS THE
COMMENTARISIUS-ANCHORITES OF CILICIA; VENERABLE AQUILA-DEACON OF
PERCHEVSKY LAVRA**

Tone 8

1 Timothy 4:5-8; Romans 8:8-14

Mark 1:1-8; Luke 10:1-15

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 03 JANUARY 2016

**31ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY;
FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST; VIRGIN-MARTYR
JULIANA AND WITH HER 500 MEN & 130 WOMEN; MARTYR
THEOMISTOCLES OF MYRA IN LYCIA**

*******HOLY SUPPER DOWNSTAIRS AFTER SERVICES*******

TROPARION—TONE 6

The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men.
Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body.
Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it.
Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life.
O Lord who didst rise from the dead: glory to Thee!

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

KONTAKION—TONE 6

When Christ God, the Giver of Life,
Raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand,
He bestowed resurrection on the human race.
He is the Savior of all,
The Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 6

READER: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

PEOPLE: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

READER: To Thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me.

PEOPLE: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

READER: O Lord, save Thy people.

PEOPLE: And bless Thine inheritance.

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 6

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the heavenly God.

He will say to the Lord: My Protector and my Refuge; my God, in whom I trust.



Archpastoral Nativity Epistle 2015-2016



Nativity Epistle of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine

To the venerable clergy, monastics and faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church beyond the borders of Ukraine and to our brothers and sisters in Christ in Ukraine,

CHRIST IS BORN! LET US GLORIFY HIM!

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"-St. Luke 2:14

This is the proclamation of the angel to the shepherds with the joyous news of Christ's birth. What was it like on this wondrous night in Bethlehem? We envision that it began as a quiet, clear and star-filled night. On the hills surrounding the town, sheep munched silently, while their shepherds drowsily warmed themselves around a fire. Suddenly, the night sky blazed with brilliant starlight. As the Star's radiance filled the sky and grew ever-brighter, the shepherds saw the choirs of angels appear, filling the air with their sweet song – the first Christmas carols. And the angel told the shepherds, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:10-13).

How did the shepherds respond to this call? Like the disciples chosen by Jesus, the shepherds dropped everything and, taking their sheep, followed the Christmas Star to the humble manger to honour the New-born Son of God (Lk. 2:13-20). There, the shepherds found that a miracle took place in this small cave – the Incarnation of the Word of God. St. John Chrysostom in his *Homily on the Nativity* describes this scene as such, “Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice.”

The Prince of Peace deigned to come down into the world as a man – doing so in humility, modestly and without pretention. He was born of the Most-Pure Virgin Mary in a cave-stable in the provincial town of Bethlehem. There were practically no human witnesses to this heavenly wonder. Only the shepherds and the Wise Men, foreigners from the east, first recognized the call of the Star to honour the new-born Christ-Child. Their presence is explained by St. Gregory the Theologian in his *Homily on the Nativity*, “But let us return to the present joy, which the Angels proclaim to the shepherds, which the heavens declare to the Magi, which the spirit of prophecy announces through many and sundry utterances, so that the Magi become heralds of Grace.”

Just as the myrrh-bearing women and guards were first to witness the newly-risen Christ at His Glorious Resurrection, so too at His birth, the foreigners and shepherds were the first witnesses of the Incarnation to give testament to this miracle. And they did so without reservation. Both the shepherds and the Wise Men immediately accepted in their hearts the meaning of the birth of the Christ-Child. During this Nativity season, will we be like the Wise Men and the shepherds, setting aside our worldly cares and unhesitatingly following the light of the Christmas Star until it reaches its apex – the Nativity of Jesus Christ our Saviour?

Let us explore the meaning of these wondrous events in Bethlehem. The traditions of the Orthodox Church and our Ukrainian culture are inscribed with deep meaning that reinforce the dramatic events of that Bethlehem night. Our beautiful Christmas carols preserve the significance of the Nativity story in song. We hear in our Nativity worship services that God has been preparing humanity for some time through the Old Testament prophets to greet the coming of the Saviour Who will free humanity from

the power of the devil. Christ was born to free the human race from sin and death, and to lead humanity to God's grace and forgiveness. Through His teachings and by His own example, the Son of God ushered in a new age based on the power of goodness and love. This is the meaning of this joyful feast day.

God has done everything necessary for our salvation, but humanity has not yet fulfilled its part. The Lord saves us through His grace and mercy, but only with our participation. The Mystery of the Incarnation can only be understood through faith. Not all of humanity has received Christ with an open heart. There are many in the world today who do not yet accept the Incarnation of the Son of God, or understand that the meaning of the Nativity is the beginning of our salvation – and not just a time for social gatherings, exchanging gifts or extended vacations. Our attention at this time of the year is diverted by the mundane cares of the world – the Christmas shopping, the office parties, school plays and holiday preparations. It becomes too easy to get caught up in these activities, distracting us from preparing for His birth and the meaning of the feast day. God gave humanity free will, so it must come to Christ of its own volition. Christ is still knocking at the door to our hearts, waiting for us to open it and “sup with Him” (Rev. 3:20).

Today, many people believe that they do not need Christ in their lives. Still others worship Christ, but do not invite Him into their lives. Without Christ, the world will continue to know unrest, war, violence and destruction. This is the world we see today – turmoil, wars, division, persecution of Christians, rampant secularism and apathy towards spiritual life. The Incarnation of the Son of God brings peace as a pastoral response to these contemporary sins and human sufferings. Yet peace can only come if we embrace it as offered, living our lives as Christ teaches, and glorifying God in our hearts. Then we can say that we have worthily met the Nativity of the Saviour. If good, and not evil, triumphs in the world and we show our love and compassion towards others, then we will grow to understand that love is precisely that precious treasure that we will take with us into eternity. Christ the Saviour leads us on a different path – towards the transformation of humanity. This is why Christ was born.

The light of Christ's birth shines upon all of us once again. The Star beckons us to follow through the forty days of fasting and preparation of

our bodies and souls. Let us glorify Him not just by words, but with our whole lives. As we gather with our families for the Nativity feast day, we pray that we will see the Light of the World, like the shepherds and Magi on that Bethlehem night and become "heralds of grace." This is the Light of God's Truth and Love. The angels proclaim: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Lk. 2:14). As we enter into this New Year 2016, let us begin to live this year in a way that pleases God so that we may indeed bring peace on earth and share in God's loving goodwill toward us.

During this Nativity season we make a special appeal to our faithful to pray for protection, salvation and the well-being of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine who are suffering through a difficult period of history, as well as for our fellow Christians in the Middle East who are experiencing brutal persecution and are forced to flee historic Christian lands.

May you have a loving and holy Nativity and a blessed New Year 2016 living together with our Lord!

CHRIST IS BORN! LET US GLORIFY HIM!

With prayers and hierarchical blessings,

† **YURIJ,**

Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

† **ANTONY,**

*Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora*

† **IOAN,**

Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora

† **JEREMIAH,**

Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of Brazil and South America

† **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



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For the Lord your God is God of Gods and the Lord of Lords...He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing (Reading from Great Vespers of the Nativity; Deuteronomy 10: 17-18).

To the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Members of Philanthropic Organizations, the Youth and Youth Workers, and the entire Orthodox Christian Family of the United States of America.

Beloved Faithful Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On these most blessed days of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are all invited to consider how we may manifest among our neighbors the love, mercy and compassion of the Christ-child. This is especially important because Christmas represents the profound and sacred point in history when invisible God, taking the form of a servant, dwells among us. From this time forth the eternal message of salvation is not merely declared through law and prophetic message, but is finally something, as Saint John the Evangelist says, *that we have heard, that we have seen with our eyes, that we have looked at and touched with our hands* (1 John 1: 1).

From this time forth, therefore, our actions are meant to reflect this tangible reality. Having heard, seen, and touched the Lord, we are called to share with the downtrodden and forgotten the same joy of the Incarnation. To do this, however, we must move beyond selfish endeavors and turn to the needs of others.

Certainly, many have contributed significantly to the Church's evangelism and outreach ministries on parish, diocesan, and jurisdictional levels. These initiatives, however, must never be viewed apart from national and global humanitarian efforts. Through our Assembly of Bishops, we have the unique blessing to participate in the work of our Agencies, and thereby become agents of the Holy Gospel in more dynamic ways than ever before. As you and your loved ones prepare to celebrate the holy feast of the Nativity, I encourage you to learn how IOCC responds to national and global humanitarian crises; how OCMC brings the good news of the Holy Gospel to all corners of the world; how OCPM cares for and offers hope to those in prisons; how OCN introduces people to Orthodoxy through digital media; and how OCF cultivates the minds and hearts of our young people on college campuses.

During the Christmas season, which is marked by an increase in God's grace upon us, we are called to serve as the all-merciful hands of God in the world. From the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus Christ is approached by countless people who are suffering and in desperate need of help, and in every such instance, Christ has compassion on them. In like fashion, we must feed the countless men, women and children who go to sleep on empty stomachs; provide shelter to the homeless; and visit our neighbors in prisons and hospitals.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, as we prepare to receive the Incarnate Lord into the world and into our lives, let us keep in mind that the light of Bethlehem and the joy of the manger of the Nativity are meant to be witnessed and experienced by all of humanity and not just a select few. During this blessed period, I extend to you the blessings of all brother Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. We wholeheartedly pray that the compassion and mercy of our Lord may be bestowed upon you and your families.

With paternal love in Christ,

+Archbishop Demetrios of America, Chairman

The Orphan: A Christmas Eve story for children

Life was hard, but they did have a mother. The young widow wore herself out trying to keep food on the table for her three children. The family was well acquainted with misery, but life had its happier moments. Even after a hard day's work, when the mother would come home dead tired, she would caress her children and speak tenderly to them, and they would feel that all was well. One would plant himself at her feet and smile at her gentle words. Another would climb onto her lap and, throwing back her curly head, would gaze into her mother's deep, pensive eyes; while the third would stand behind and embrace her neck with his thin arms, exclaiming repeatedly, "Mama, dearest mama!" Those were wonderful times for the children, and the mother, too, could enjoy a rest from her arduous labors.

There came a day, however, when the widow had worn herself down completely and could not even rise from her bed. Soon her body was laid to rest in the grave. Now the children were orphans indeed! They had lost their dearly beloved mother. Vanya remembered the anguished shrieks of his younger brother and sister: "Mama's dead, our dear Mama is dead!" He remembered how she was placed in a coffin, how she was carried out of the house, the funeral in the church, and, finally, the dreadful "thud, thud, thud," made by clumps of frozen

earth being thrown onto the lid of the coffin after it had been lowered into the ground. Their dear mother was now in the grave, gone from them forever.

The orphans went home. There they huddled together, clinging to one another for comfort. And so they stood, not wanting to move, until one of them suddenly remembered, "The day after tomorrow is Christmas." "Yes, Christmas," echoed the others. But their voices were sad. When their mother was alive, they would shout merrily, "Christmas! Christmas!" But now... The orphans were entrusted to the care of one of their relatives, a man who already had a number of his own children. He and his wife were not unkind, but the family was quite poor as it was; they could barely feed their own children. The orphans sometimes had to go hungry because the family that sheltered them went hungry, too.

"Ah! ours is a wretched lot," sighed the uncle from time to time. "You can bend over backwards, and still nothing comes of it. And now we've been saddled with these..." Vanya, on hearing this, felt with his child's heart that his uncle was not angry at them, that his words came from sorrow. As if to confirm his feelings, he heard his aunt: "Enough, Fili-pich!" she said to her husband. "It's a sin to complain about one's lot in life, and it's still more sinful to offend an orphan. Orphans are God's children." And she stroked Vanya tenderly on his head. Her words relaxed her husband's mood. He took their youngest son and swung him above his head. "Ai, children. Hurry and grow up. When you're old enough to work, then we'll have a better life, God willing."

One day weeping and wailing could be heard from Uncle Filipich's cottage. And with good reason. Their horse had died. And what is a peasant without a horse? He's like a man without arms. The whole family was drowning in tears. "God will not abandon us, Filipich," said his wife. "But what am I to do without a horse?" "You can go work in town as a day-laborer." "That brings in next to nothing!" "Uncle," piped up Vanya, "I know now how to weave baskets. We can sell them." "That's good thinking, lad," responded his uncle and, waving his hand, he went out of the cottage.

Filipich began working in town as a hired man. He'd work all day, and in the evening he'd come home to his village, only two miles' distance. All of his pay would go towards feeding the family and the orphans. His nephew kept his word and sold the baskets he wove in town. Still, the money that the uncle and his nephew made together was only enough for food. Winter was approaching, and one child needed a coat, another needed a hat, a third something else... Altogether they needed quite a lot. Filipich was aware of this. He walked home, thinking to himself: "Here it is almost winter. We have to get in a supply of firewood, but to do it we need a horse. And the wife's coat is in tatters; how can she possibly go out to fetch water in the cold weather? Ai, poverty is bitter!"

Filipich knit his brow, trying to think of some solution. Meanwhile, at home there awaited him news of a fresh calamity. Whether from poor feed, or because she was old, their last cow died. Filipich threw up his hands in despair.

"What's to be done?! We'll have to send the children out into the world," he thought. And in-deed, no matter how much Filipich exerted himself, no matter how industriously his nephew worked weaving baskets, there was nothing to be done but to send the older lads out into the streets to beg. Again there were tears. And it was not only the children who cried; mother and father wept, too. They dressed their ten-year old son, Petya, and their orphaned nephew, Vanya, as warmly as possible. Then, blessing them with the sign of the Cross, they sent them off to town to ask alms "for Christ's sake."

Again, the Feast of Nativity drew near. Filipich spent the whole week in town working, not even coming home for the night; he wanted to earn as much as possible before the Feast in order to buy some presents. At last, the day before the Feast, he came home bearing his inexpensive purchases. There at home, the children awaited him eagerly. And what kind of purchases did he bring? If children of wealthy parents saw them, they would have walked away from them, but these poor children were glad even of such shabby and paltry gifts. The eldest son tugged on a worn, patched coat that barely reached his knees; a younger brother put on an old hat that almost covered his nose; their sister tried on a pair of boots that were closer to the size of her mother's. The food stuffs for the feastday were of the same poor quality, but the children rejoiced even in these. They gave thanks to God, and went to bed.

Here it was, the eve of Christ's Nativity. Petya and Vanya went to town to ask for alms. Around the time of major feasts, people were especially generous. In general, all kind Orthodox Christians have compassion on their poorer brethren in Christ, and each gives as he is able. At the bakery they gave generous loaves of white bread to the poor; at the gateway to homes belonging to the wealthy, the poor were given money; everywhere along the streets one could see passersby thrusting coins into the open hands of those reduced to poverty.

Petya and Vanya received their share. By midday Petya's bag was full, and he made his way home to the village. Vanya stayed later, wanting to bring back as much as he could for the family. Before he realized, the pale winter light had faded. The weather turned and it began to snow. As he hurried to go home, the storm picked up... Vanya trudged along through the growing darkness. He was tired, and the bag pulled on his shoulders. His hands grew numb. Overtaken by cold and fatigue, the boy sat down in the snow to rest. He was not afraid of the dark; it was not the first time he was making his way home so late. But the driving snow... Vanya got up and again pushed himself on his way. He shivered

as the icy wind cut his cheeks. How tired he was. His legs felt as though they would buckle under him at any moment. Indeed, just then a strong gust of wind toppled him into the snow. "I'm going to freeze," he thought, "but I don't have much farther to go. I think I see lights..." Vanya tried to get up, but he had no strength. "Oh, how I wish I could go to sleep," he thought. "But if I go to sleep, the snow will cover me, I'll freeze-and tomorrow is Nativity." Again Vanya made an effort to get up, and again he collapsed. "I'll fall asleep... I'll freeze... Nativity... Petya is at home..." His mind wandered. Another minute and he would fall asleep-and never wake up. Providentially, a troika was just then dashing along the same road. In his half-conscious state, Vanya heard the tinkling of the harness bells. "They must have gone by," he thought dreamily. But the driver's sharp eyes had caught sight of him. "Sir!" he shouted to his passenger. "We just passed some dark shape."

"Get along with you - and make it quick. We'll be late for the party." "We'll make it, sir; the troika, God willing, will get us there in time. Do allow me to take a closer look. What if it should be some person?" "Well, all right, but step lively." "So it is," came the voice of the driver through the snow. "A pauper lad. The poor thing. He was probably going home for Nativity." The baron shuddered. He thought of his own children, at home, warm. "Quick, bring him here!" he shouted to the driver. "Can we save him? That would be the best Christmas present for the children." He wrapped the boy in his fur coat. "Let's get a move on. I see lights ahead; there must be a village."

As the horses raced through the snow, the baron rubbed the boy's temples and hands and breathed warm air into his face. The horses flew into the street. "Stop at the first cottage!" The door opened, and the baron carried in the boy. He had some wine, and he began to rub the boy vigorously with the alcohol. He also employed other remedies, and within an hour Vanya opened his eyes and began breathing more normally. While the baron was bringing the boy around, the old women of the cottage fluttered about, doing what they could to help and whispering among themselves, "It's orphan-Vanya! The poor boy! And on the eve of Nativity! God saved him." The baron learned where Filipich lived and took Vanya there himself. While they were driving to the other side of the village, Vanya kept looking to the right of the baron, where he saw a beautiful woman holding in her arms an equally beautiful child. "How is it," Vanya thought to himself, "that he is so little and he doesn't even look cold. I'm much bigger, and I nearly froze."

The baron carried Vanya onto the warm stove and was appalled by the family's poverty. He questioned Filipich about everything, and said, "Tomorrow is Christmas. For Christ's sake, accept this as a gift," and he handed him a hundred-

ruble note. Filipich was about to fall at the baron's feet, but the baron rushed out the door, and his horses sped along the snow, carrying the baron home for his family's Christmas party. Tomorrow, on the Feast of Christ's Nativity, he would tell his dear children how he had saved a poor orphan from death. "Today," reflected the baron, "is the happiest day of my life: God granted me to save a human life."

On the Feast of Nativity, Vanya described to everyone how beautiful the baron's wife was, and her adorable child. "But the baron was alone," he was told. "No, no," insisted Vanya. "I saw the baroness and the child." Then he thought for a moment. "The baroness and the child looked a lot like the Mother of God and Christ that we have in the church." Then everyone understood just what Woman and what Child Vanya had seen. Filipich, thanks to the assistance of the baron, is now living more comfortably. His children and the orphans have grown up and are able to help him. For his part, Filipich has managed to put aside a hundred rubles. "These are the orphans' monies," he said to his wife. "God sent it to them, and through them to me, a sinner. As soon as they are out on their own, I'll give them these hundred rubles." "And you took it into your head to grumble at your fate," his wife said with a smile. "Yes, that was sinful of me. Who knows what would have become of us if it hadn't been for orphan-Vanya!"

Each year, on the Feast of Nativity, the Filipich family has a moleben served for the health of their benefactor.

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Christmas Day

The Savior...by Bishop Robert Barron

In the Gospel of Luke, we discover the Annunciation to Mary. Here is what the angel Gabriel says to the Virgin: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33).

No first-century Israelite would have missed the meaning here: this child shall be the fulfillment of the promise made to King David. He will be the king of the world, the one who would bring unity and peace to the nations.

The angel confirms this to the shepherds in the fields: "For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord: (Luke 2:11). Saviour is *Soter* in Greek, which means "healer." This was rendered in Latin as

Salvator, Saviour in English. In old myths and legends, the true king would bring healing to his country, just as a wicked king would make the whole country sick.

Further, this healer is "Christ and Lord." *Christos* means anointed, and this has a clear Davidic overtone, for David had been anointed king by the prophet Samuel, and all of his successors had been anointed. This baby will be the point of ordering for the entire world; he'll be the ruler and governor, the one who sets the tone.

And this is further emphasized by calling him "Lord"—*Kyrios* in Greek, *Dominus* in Latin. He is the one who should dominate us, rule over every aspect of us.

With the angel's next words, everything is turned upside down: "And this shall be the sign to you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." The new David, Christ the Lord, the *Dominus*, the center and orderer of all things, the emperor of the universe...is a baby? And a baby wrapped up so it can't move? And lying where? In the grubby place where the animals eat?

Here is all of the poetry and all of the drama of Christmas. Indeed, the divine power is made manifest in weakness, for the divine power is nothing other than love, giving oneself away, being bound to the other, becoming food for those around you.

Finally, alongside the single angel there appeared an entire army of angels. We should not get sentimental about these angels. These aren't cute, chubby babies playing harps. They represent the army of heaven, which is more powerful than all of the armies of earth. The Prince of Peace has an army that is more powerful than anything that is in the world.

There are the glad tidings of Christmas. A new king has come, bringing with him an army of heavenly messengers, and he intends to bring peace and unity to the nations.

Pani Gina has All Saints Camp Benefit Calendars for sale for \$25. Please see her if you are interested...

Parish Wall Calendars are available for your use downstairs—four different icons decorate them. Please look over them and take one home for your wall!

We have envelopes ready for your use downstairs. Due to cost, we will be using undistributed 2015 envelopes in 2016—the dates will

be wrong, but the weeks should roughly line up. Please see Father Bob if you have any questions...

REMINDER: We will celebrate our Nativity Eve Holy Supper—Sviati Vechir—after our service today. This will be a pot-luck FASTING meal. Please join us to share the blessings of God for the gift of His Son as well as fellowship and love!