



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday before the Nativity

December 18, 2011

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel
J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Please be certain you are with us in preparation for the Birth of the Saviour on Saturday evening for the Complines service. Saturday is a day of fast from meat and dairy products that our heart, soul and mind may concentrate on the real value and purpose of the feast day we are about to celebrate.

+++ Our sincere gratitude goes out to all who secured orders, filled them and came to offer their helping hands to make the Bake Sale a success. May the gracious Lord continue to bless us with his heavenly grace in good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ We will be having until the Feast of the Nativity a Basket Collection of foods for the local food pantry in assisting those in need. Please bring your donation in as soon as possible and place it in the basket in the vestibule. We thank you in advance for your consideration of food and accompanying prayer on their behalf.

+++ We are pleased to acknowledge the kind generosity of Debra and George Szmaida in offering the candles which will grace the Altar Table, the Table of Preparation and the Sacramental Table for the Lord's Nativity. They provide us with an example of the new-born Christ Child as the Light of the world and are offered in loving memory of Debra's aunts, +Anna Noveshalski and +Marie Mecka. We pray the merciful Lord continues to bless Debra and George with good health and grants the souls of +Anna And +Marie a blessed repose and creates for them Eternal Memory!.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ Each Monday evening at 7: 30 PM we have prayer devotions with homily in preparing for the coming of the Lord among us. Please be certain to invest time and soul in this worthy cause. COME, LORD JESUS!

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received this past week: Tithe Offering, \$334.00; Candles, \$25.00; Food Coupons, \$100.00; Nativity Candles, \$25.00; \$Flowers, \$20.00; Holyday, \$31.00; Kitchen, \$145.00, for a total of \$615.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Mary Jaakobs, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleni Pallas, Debra Szmaida, Paul Szmaida, and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$[REDACTED] from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$[REDACTED]. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$[REDACTED] on this project to date!

Wisdom! Be Attentive

Through faith, O Christ, You justified the patriarchs, for through them, You made a commitment to a Church with gentiles. These saint are glorified because from them descends the Virgin who gave You birth. Through their prayers, O Christ our God, have mercy on us Troparion, Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs.

You did not worship a man-made image, O thrice-blessed youths! Protected by a power beyond description, you were glorified in the test of fire. From the searing flames you cried out to God, saying; "Hasten to help us, O merciful Lord, for in your greatness, You can do whatever You will Kontakion of the Three Holy Youths.

Blessed are You, and praiseworthy, O Lord, the God of our fathers and glorious forever is your Name Prokimenon, Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs.

Great are the deeds performed with faith by three youths rejoicing in the flaming furnace as if they stood in refreshing waters; and Daniel the Prophet faced lions as though they were sheep. Through their prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls Troparion, Sunday of the Holy Fathers.

Rejoice, O Bethlehem and make ready O Ephrata! Behold a Virgin is on her way to give birth to the Great Shepherd she carries in her womb. The God-bearing forefathers will rejoice at his sight and together with the shepherds, they will glorify him in the Virgin's arms Kontakion, Preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

At that time, since Mary was of the house of David, she registered with the venerable Joseph in Bethlehem. She was with child, having conceived virginally. Her time was come, and they could find no room in the inn, but the cave seemed a joyful palace for the Queen. Christ is to be born to renew the likeness that had been lost of old Troparion, Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord.

Today he Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth in a manner beyond understanding to the Word who is eternal. Rejoice, therefore, universe, when you hear it heralded together with the angels and the shepherds, glorify him who chose to be seen as a new-born Child, while remaining God for all eternity Kontakion, Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord.

Celebrating and Worshipping

As the feast of the Lord's Nativity approaches, we quickly remember that the day He assumed our human nature, was above all, a scene of worship. The ever-Virgin and Joseph, the foster-father worshipped the child given them by God the Father through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The angels sang, "Glory to God..." and the shepherds came filled with wonder and ecstatic awe!

Thanks to the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church of God, the plain truth and beguiling beauty of that first stupendous night is not a dim memory, but a compelling reality. St. Leo the Great provides this insight for us in the fifth century: "What was visible to our Saviour has passed over us into his sacred Mysteries. We have living contact with the Son of God, with Christ, through the sacramental Mysteries instituted and entrusted to the care of the Body of Christ. As assuredly as the vehicle of salvation is built upon the truth and person of Jesus Christ, so too, are the sacramental Mysteries offered us as signs of his presence among us"

The sacramental Mysteries are efficacious signs through which our heavenly Father wishes to touch, and transform our lives. Let us remember that three sacramental Mysteries – baptism, chrismation, and holy orders – impart a sacramental character or spiritual seal. Each of these can be received but once because they permanently transform the recipient and configure the recipient to Christ. This means that the Holy Spirit brings about in the very depth of one's soul a spiritual image of Christ coupled with a participation in his life. In baptism and chrismation, this indelible seal marks out the recipient as an adopted son or daughter in Christ, a person privileged and prepared to take part in the worship of the Church. Holy Orders imparts a further sacramental character enabling the ordinand to act in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

The sacramental Mysteries express and fulfill the promise of Christ to remain with his Body, the Church. This is the context which we can most readily understand the teaching of the Bride of Christ. The sacramental Mysteries do not simply illustrate God's grace, they are the means through which the transforming power of grace is made available and active in our lives. Christ was so determined to remain with us in this way that the effectiveness of the sacramental Mysteries does not depend on the

personal worthiness of the minister performing them. Rather, they are efficacious by the very fact that the sacramental action is performed. It is Christ working through the humble and frail medium of the priest.

This, however, leads us to understand other important considerations. Initially, anyone who celebrates a sacramental action has a most serious obligation to remain in a state of grace and pursue personal holiness. If there is a matter of sinfulness, he has an obligation to repent of it, confess it and seek forgiveness. Secondly, the sacramental Mysteries are to be received with a living and active faith. When we approach with faith, we find these signs express, nourish and strengthen our adherence to the faith of the Church. In fact, there is a deep and mutual correspondence between what we believe and how we worship.

We readily see that the grace imparted us through the Mysteries of the Church, even if they are not received by all the faithful, is necessary for salvation. Through the sacramental Mysteries we receive forgiveness, we become adopted children of God, we grow in likeness of Christ and we become living communicants of his Body, the Church. By sharing in the sacramental signs, we long to see God in heaven with all the redeemed and rejoice in his presence forever.

These signs of heaven should not be understood to operate mechanically. To the contrary, they are celebrated in the sacred rites or ceremonies that we commonly call liturgy, the public prayer of the Church. This prayer spans heaven and earth and is shared with the Birthgiver of God, the saints and all the angels. In the liturgy, we come together by the unity of the Holy Spirit as a priestly people. The baptized offer themselves as a spiritual sacrifice along with priests, deacons and bishops.

We are familiar with the use of water, bread, and oil as sacramental signs and symbols. We are also accustomed to gestures such as laying on of hands and the sign of the cross as well as blessings. Some of these signs are drawn from nature. Others are drawn from human culture. All sacramental signs emerged in salvation history and were taken up by Christ to convey his saving truth and love. These signs are inseparable from the words that bear their meaning and convey their power.

The liturgy by which we share in God's saving truth and love is to be celebrated, when possible, with song and language which expresses properly the teaching of Christ and lifts our minds and hearts to heaven. So, too, the liturgy is celebrated in the presence of holy images, the icons of the Church, above all the sacred image of Christ and the Birthgiver of God with all the saints and angels to remind

us we pray with them in their presence and that our true worship takes place as we join the citizenry of heaven for the glorification of the Blessed Trinity. Their presence serves to remind us they join us in prayer, they intercede for us before the throne of the Lord and inspire us in the fulfillment of our worship.

It is fitting that the liturgy be celebrated amid beautiful natural sung music and hymnology in sacred space befitting dedication to the worship of God. When a church is consecrated, we clearly see the sacred importance of church furnishings, the altar table, the tabernacle along with all the appropriate appointments which enhance the dignity of the place of God's encounter with man.

Indeed, the liturgy is very rich and beautiful and is a reflection of the glory of heaven which is our place of true citizenship. Amid such rich diversity there is a oneness in faith and sacramental life received from the Apostles and handed down through the centuries. It is because the Church is catholic that she can welcome within her unity fold all the authentic riches of man's highest and noblest culture while safeguarding and embellishing what our heavenly Father has instituted for our salvation. The Church carefully distinguishes between those things which are unchangeable and those that rightfully can be adapted to human culture the world over.

Incense

Pure frankincense tree resin is ground into a fine powder which is then saturated with rich fragrant oil. Powerful and earthy aromas are derived from cedar wood which may be sweetened with a touch of rose, vanilla or amber musks. Some incenses are confected from sandalwood, sweet myrrh and soft spices. Rose oil fragrance or subtle fruity and dewy petal character may be harmonized with a rich and elegant blend of orange blossoms and citrus fruit oils tempered with woody and mossy base notes. In other instances, fresh citrus and sweet berries are joined together with ginger and neroli. Hints of lemon and evergreen form the base of many fine varieties used in churches. Flower oils derived from the middle East bring about a floral blend of rose, orange blossoms, geranium, jasmine and carnation.

Kneading brings about this mixture to a dough-like consistency. The incense is then rolled into sheet form and the monastics who make it cut the incense into small grains while saying the Jesus Prayer. The grains of incense are then covered in a fire-purified clay powder to mitigate the stickiness and are cured for a number of weeks.

Such a method is faithful to the way of preparation used for centuries on Mount Athos. Incense is burned atop a lighted coal and can be used at home or in church as an accompaniment to prayer.

What is a Child Worth?

*Today's culture is sadly marked by a lack of appreciation for,
and hostility toward, the gift of childhood*

On the Vigil of the Nativity feast when Great Complines are being celebrated, under the folds of his vestments, as if his fingers were not fit to even touch it, a symbol of the fact that God is with us, is the gorgeous icon of the Nativity of our Lord, held and carried upright reposing on his chest. As the priest approaches the sacramental table on which it will be placed, to be venerated on this feast day by the faithful, acolytes precede him in procession, raising clouds of incense in anticipating respect while the people sing heaven's praises.

It is a moment of wonder. He is the image of God himself, that child, the Word made speechless, swaddled in bands of cloth as He would be later wrapped in a shroud. No more could we in the west view the child as merely a defective adult. *That* child is perfect omnipotence.

By contrast, several years prior to Christ, the people of Carthage would slaughter children to appease their god Moloch, who governed a kind of economic relationship with his devotees. If you wanted riches, you had to give riches. If you wanted good harvests, you had to give blood. Sometimes Moloch was represented by a large mouth, in front of a furnace. The idea as Scripture records, was to make your child "...pass through the fire..." 2 Kings 23: 10. This was not done with an easy heart; drums, tambourines and narcotic fumes drowned out the wailing of children charred beyond recognition.

The excuse was superstition in time of famine or war. What we do, by contrast, is done for convenience. What happens to a society that lightly disposes of its children, as we have for over forty years? We refer to not only those who assist in or procure abortions, but everyone who breathes that cultural air.

There are several things that happen to people who sentimentalize both the Christ child and Moloch – who have forgotten that the Child has overcome the world and who turn demurely away from their own bloody sacrifices.

The first is obvious. We simply learn to hate children. Today, there are books that tell us how rotten it is to have a child and others to show us how to rub out any residue of childhood innocence. It is no wonder the birthrate of many countries is suicidally low. In our so-called enlightened countries there are two children at most in families. How many have but simply one? And behind the warm smiles of an effervescent mother is hidden the truth that she has aborted at least one child? It is a new thing in the world to have a sibling of either the same or the opposite sex.

In addition, we keep our children out of sight. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* traces the decline of cities to the removal of children from everyday life, mainly the institutionalizing of every facet of their existence. The real bonds of any neighborhood are forged by children, those half unruly creatures who pop into the grocery store, who cross through yards, who link people together, often against their inclinations. Today we barricade children in school and in day-care centers.

The poet Robert Frost grew upon on a farm in New Hampshire, yet somehow found time to wander through snowy woods or swing from atop birch trees. Now we make certain our children will never know anything similar because we corrupt them out of fear some lunatic may be hiding under a snow pile, ready and eager to attack and harm them.

If we really liked children, never mind actually love them, we would never permit pornography spectacles before them every day, many times a day. Our children are exposed to filth that is deadening to the soul. Take a look, even cursory of magazines displayed for sale in the neighborhood stores or the swill TV networks have to offer. Hollywood cannot even be mentioned because it is dog's vomit.

Another thing which happens is that we are severed from time and the generations. We are rootless. Back when we had families rich in children, we would tell them stories about children who came before, which is what links one generation to the next. People who live with children do not just occupy a set interval of time, but dwell under a canopy of eternity. How cheapened is life without that prospect! How paltry to forget your ancestors in faith because your descendants, if you have any, will forget you in turn! This is a new thing in the world and no culture can survive it!

The severance also infects what we believe about marriage. To see what we lose, read Edmund Spenser's *Epithalamion*, dedicated to his wedding day and his bride. A marriage for Spenser is not a

matter of consenting adults who really like each other for awhile. All the cosmos is invited to share his joy, for a marriage is the act that binds together man and woman, reaching back in time, rolling forward to the generations ahead and seeing all that God's love has wrought in us and brought about! Today we have reduced love to passing feelings, to physical appetite.

People who live with children do not just
occupy a set interval of time but dwell
under a canopy of eternity.

This leads to the third effect of our cultural attitude regarding children: loneliness and fear of our fragility. We are so afraid of death and the last thing we want around is a reminder of mortality. Children are those reminders. Every parent knows that as children are growing up, he or she is growing older and frailer. A child reminds us forcibly, of our own weakness, first because the child is utterly dependent on us and then because we eventually will be dependent so utterly on our children.

Consider the embedded lie in what is falsely called *Planned Parenthood*. It has never been about planning anyone's parenthood, rather ensuring that parenthood does not occur and if it does, about disposing of the unseemly products. The very name conceals a timid and child-hating idea that parenthood ought to be planned. G. K. Chesterton opens up a dark corner of our life and lets us see the light: "If you plan an adventure, you are not on an adventure. If you engineer joy it is not joy. The best things in life come to us as gifts. If a child is planned, that child becomes an egotistical extension of yourself, your vanities and your caprices." "The family is good for us," precisely "because it does not conform to our wishes – because every child born to us comes to disrupt our routine; God gives us children to breakup that hard shell of self that it be uncovered and shared with those entrusted to our care." Our Lord uses simpler language: "Unless you become as one these you shall not enter the kingdom of God" Matthew 18: 3.

The last effect is a diminished capacity for wonder – at ourselves and at the world God has given us. Behold the eyes of a newborn child. The eyes of our babies are like they came from another world. Their eyes are full of wonder and are wonderful to behold.

And so much of our educational system seems designed to flatten wonder. We teach scorn and flippancy, fine vices for tempting souls to their damnation. Are they taught an appreciation for beauty, to be awestruck by the sublime in God's creation? Are children advanced towards achieving wisdom?

Aristotle tells us thinking begins in wonder; if so, we lose the longing to be wise when we lose our sense of wonder. We end by transforming ourselves into industrial products, designed babies, engineered biomass. C.S. Lewis argued in *The Abolition of Man*, as soon as we think we have triumphed over human nature, because we lack the capacity to wonder at a gift that demands gratitude and reverence, Nature takes her revenge on us. We can only conquer human nature by reducing ourselves to objects, to products.

But there is hope. There must be because our God governs us, ignore him though we may. We must turn again to the child and remember what it was like to love children; then we might cry out with the Psalmist, "O Lord, our God, how awesome is your name through all the earth! You have set your majesty above the heavens! Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have drawn a defense against your enemies, to silence enemy and avenger" Psalms 18: 2: 3.

When we recover the wonder of a child, then and only then might we say, with the cheers of soldiers marching to battle, that our heavenly Father has made us "...a little less than the angels..." Psalms 18: 6.

May we do so and may our gracious God give strength to our youth!

Prayer For Making Decisions

Lord, God, Almighty, I am facing a difficult decision and I do not know what road to take. You have given me the awesome power to choose freely, as well as the intelligence to choose wisely and rightly. Inspire me to make the right and honorable decision that your name be glorified. Let me prayerfully weigh the reasons on all sides and then rely on your guidance and inspiration. When the decision is reached, let me not look back with regret or question my conclusion, knowing that I have done my part and have made the right decision in your eyes. Amen.

A Season of Hope

*Whereas consumerism brings anxiety and restlessness,
with Christ's birth comes the gift of hope*

December marks the official start of winter in most of the western world. Yet it is not the only winter that the world is facing. Demographers increasingly speak of a demographic winter wherein birthrates fall below replacement in most industrialized nations.

There are many reasons and causes of this phenomenon. However, the ultimate roots can be seen as moral and spiritual and are inevitably linked to a disturbing deficit of faith, hope and indeed, love as well. To bring children into the world calls for self-centered *eros* to be fulfilled in a creative *agape* rooted in generosity and marked by trust and hope in the future as befits faithful servants of God.

Indeed, such a decline is nothing short of a lack of hope. A materialistic mindset replaces hope in a real future with something else: an immediate desire for consumer goods and status. This mindset is sadly brought home to us at this time of year, as we are about to celebrate the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. In western culture, this feast day has sadly become the consumer drown-out season of the entire year!

In more prosperous countries, excessive prosperity and the consumer mentality, paradoxically joined to a certain anguish and uncertainty about the future, deprive married couples of the generosity and courage needed for raising up new life; thus life is often perceived not as a blessing, but as a danger from which to defend oneself.

A society with no hope in the future and a resulting lack of openness to life is, not surprisingly, a society that would eagerly trade a celebration of sublime birth for one of consumerism. How many young marrying couples today do not disclose to the priest with whom they plan their marriage the idea that they will not have children so they can have a glamorous wedding ceremony. If they admitted the truth to the priest, he would not be able to solemnize their marriage in the Church. Unless their marriage is open to the birth of children, there is no valid marriage. They simply cohabit together without sacramental grace.

A purely materialistic view of our Lord's birth or as it is called in hedonistic western culture, Christmas, is even more noticeable each year as time passes and can be recognized as a symptom of a hopeless way of life inevitably evolving.

Certainly, as believers in Christ, we have the reminder of our hope in salvation that comes with the birth of our Lord. With this salvific event, the process of our own redemption is made possible. Christ's Nativity – as the angels told the shepherds – heralds "peace on earth to men of goodwill." This is quite contrary to the anxiety of a consumer mentality and finds no acceptance in the heart, soul and mind of those who wish to undertake no responsibility for rearing children for whatever exaggerated reason they can invent such as the horrible circumstances in the world that do not lend themselves to exposing an innocent child to its bankrupt values.

In addition to the Nativity feast, the Church of Jesus Christ offers additional celebrations and thus dramatic reminders which highlight hope and love and new on going life. How can the remembrance of St. Nicholas and St. Spiridon not reflect a positive upbeat accent into even a dull existence? Does not the second day of the Nativity celebration excite the rational man as he sees the enduring and profound part the Birthgiver of God plays in the Nativity drama? What about the angelic chorus and the self-emptying of life in St. Stephen? The message that each person is particularly loved gives us a fullness of hope in Jesus Christ. Even the anguish of Rachel at the reason-defying death of the Holy Innocents shows our God takes to himself even those who without awareness become an immolation for our cause in salvation. Even the brutality of man concludes with the victims being glorified and associated with the innocence of the Christ-Child and so they are fittingly sanctified with him.

Finally, as we celebrate life within the family in our view of the sacred space occupied by Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus, we have a good opportunity to reflect on our own lives and on the way we rear our own children.

Believers in Jesus Christ have hope on earth and subsequently in heaven. Those who emphasize consumerism have only anxiety and possessions which do nothing to decrease the restlessness of our hearts. Our hearts are restless until they repose in God. We but delay the inevitable because we belong to God and are meant for God. This restfulness in God gives us hope while the consumer only has yesterday's purchase.

Hope is no small matter. If we cannot hope for more than is effectively attainable at any given time, our lives will soon be without hope. Our hope is based not on the simply here and now, but on the hereafter; and not just on ourselves, but on the One who created us. The greatest gift the new born Saviour delivers is the gift of salvation!

*The fruit
of the Spirit is*

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

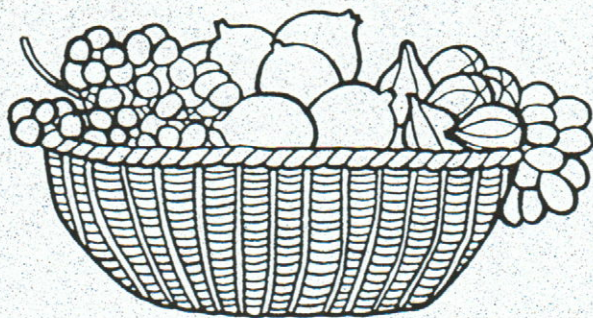
Kindness

Generosity

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-control



Trust Anew

Neither must you be perturbed when you hear of wars and insurrections. These things are bound to happen first, but the end does not follow immediately

Luke 21: 9.

Particularly in our time, as we look around the world, it is easy to become discouraged and depressed like the people to whom Jesus is speaking in the gospel of St. Luke. We observe the circumstances in our culture and out of our own limitation we observe the world's end is approaching imminently.

Wars, insurrections, plagues, famines and natural disasters continue to occur primarily because of the practices and lifestyles we have introduced and brought about. Sometimes the tragedies of our personal lives – illness, death of loved ones, unemployment – weigh us down with sorrow and despair. “How” we cry out in genuine anguish, “can we avoid becoming ‘perturbed’”?

Today's world is the result of what how we have lived, how we have functioned and what we believe. The present state of our Church, too, is the result of our neglect because genuine faith and belief would have guided us in a different direction and response to the problems which surround us.

In the turmoil of times like these, we can come to recognize the permanent, unchanging truth of God's enduring love and care for us all, but first, we must be willing to let go of our old worldly ways of thinking and acting and living, so that we grow and change in the perfect humanity that is our destiny as a result of Christ's victorious resurrection.

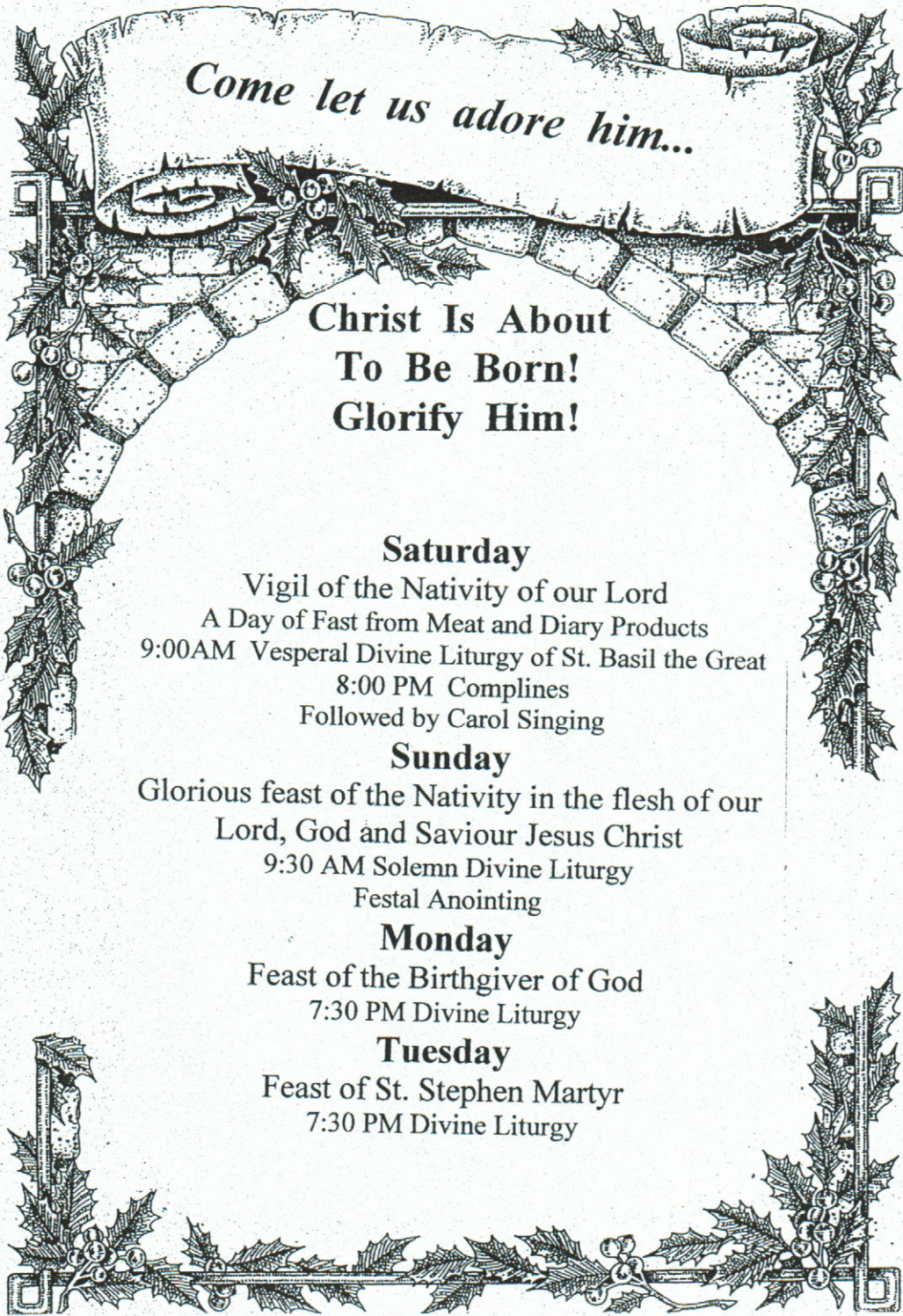
If we genuinely celebrate the feast days in the liturgical life of the Church, we begin to understand the enduring life and final victory of believers in Christ. Our Lord comes to us in our daily living ever anew which then places our trust in a loving and concerned God as we pray for patience and courage to continue working for necessary changes both in the world and in our own lives.

Regardless how horrific circumstances in our world become, we know our God rules and guides our destiny.



WE
AWAIT THE LORD'S
COMING





Come let us adore him...

**Christ Is About
To Be Born!
Glorify Him!**

Saturday

Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord

A Day of Fast from Meat and Dairy Products

9:00AM Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

8:00 PM Complines

Followed by Carol Singing

Sunday

Glorious feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our
Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ

9:30 AM Solemn Divine Liturgy

Festal Anointing

Monday

Feast of the Birthgiver of God

7:30 PM Divine Liturgy

Tuesday

Feast of St. Stephen Martyr

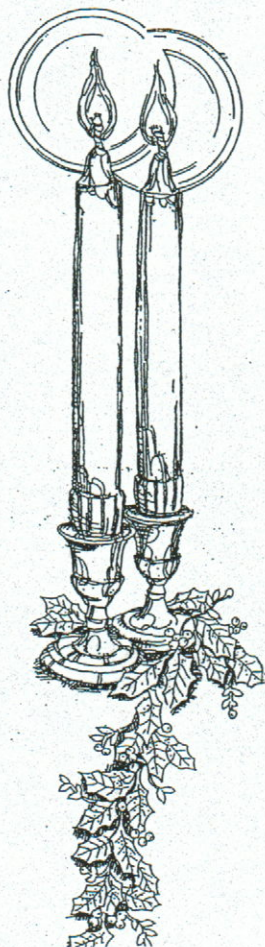
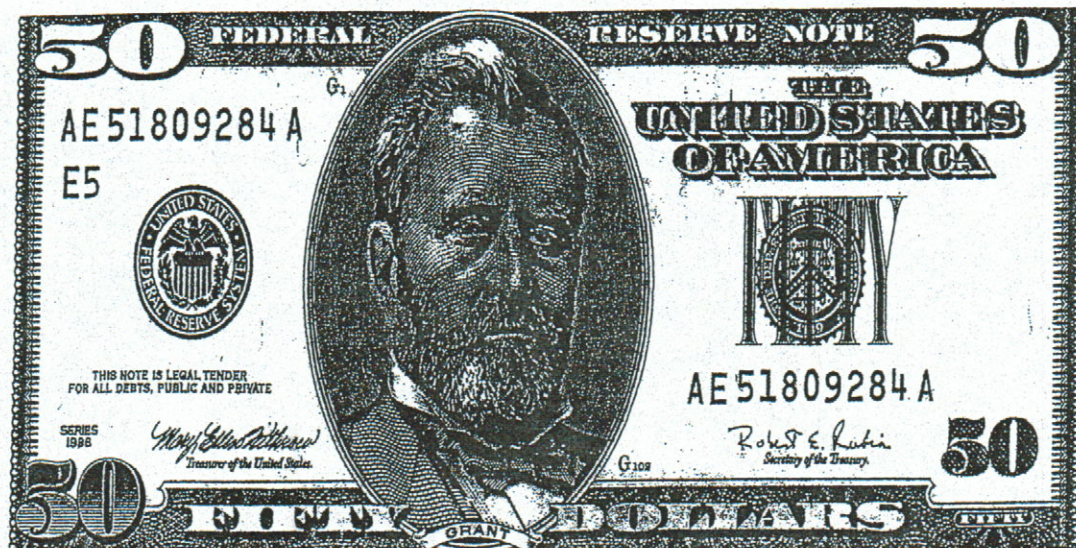
7:30 PM Divine Liturgy



Come

**join the angels
in singing
God's praises
as his Son is
born among us!**

**Accompany the
shepherds
who came to
the stable twice
to
witness
heavenly
wonder!**



Grant
 O Lord
 that
 WE
 all recognize our blessings
 in the spirit of the
 Wise Men
 be generous
 to Christ
 on
 his
 birthday!

YOUR SPEECH BETRAYS YOU!

Do you remember how St. Peter boasted that he would never turn away from Christ in His hour of need, and then shamefully tried to deny that he even knew Jesus? Despite his protests to the contrary, Peter could not fool one of the maid servants in the courtyard of Caiaphas, who accused him of being one of Christ's followers. *"Even your speech betrays you!"* she exclaims.

The same can be said of all of us. OUR speech betrays us many times in life. Unfortunately, we do not always show control and restraint in the manner in which we speak, nor do we always speak in an admirable way. St. James writes about this in great detail in his New Testament epistle. He tells us: *"Man has tamed every kind of beast and bird, every reptile and creature of the sea, BUT NO MAN CAN TAME THE TONGUE. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison!"* James also points out that *"... out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. THIS SHOULD NOT BE SO!"*

Our speech must be in harmony with how we live. We must say what we feel, and feel what we say. Good words are worth much, and cost little. More importantly, good words and kind speech are witnesses to the quality of our Christian character. The words we speak often give others an insight into our heart and soul. They are a reflection of our feelings, for what we SAY reveals what we ARE. All of us are followers of Jesus Christ, and we should choose our words accordingly. An Orthodox Christian must speak with conviction and kindness. We are called upon to speak truthfully and respectfully at all times to everyone with whom we come in contact, always following the example of our Lord.