

**We all should be  
Rooted in Christ**

# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of the Forefathers

December 20, 2009

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;  
Father John Cmur; Deacon Kenneth E. Ellis and  
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

+++ Monday evening we have the final regular preparatory services for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord. Please come and join us at 7: 30 PM for prayer and praise. Confessions are heard prior to and after services.

+++ Candy orders are available today in the vestibule of the church. Please be certain to pick up your order today. Once again we offer thanks to our God for the commitment to financial stability of our parish in the hearts of our faithful parishioners.

+++ We are pleased to announce and thank the three family units who have increased their Sunday offering. Having the example and support of these generous souls is important to our parish. We pray others will pray and follow their example for the glory of God and the good of the parish. We pray their generosity be blessed with good health of body and soul for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ We acknowledge receipt of two gifts for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord. Mrs. Theresa Shwahla of Freehold offered \$100.00 in blessed memory of her husband, +Steve, and Atty. Judith Martyak in Doylestown, Pa. offered \$100.00 in thanksgiving for blessings received. We pray the gracious Lord comforts Theresa in her loss as He grants a blessed repose to the soul of +Steve and creates for him Eternal Memory! Our additional prayer is the Lord will continue to bless the Martyak family and their loved ones with good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ The offering for flowers for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord was taken recently. It is not too late to make an offering for this purpose if you were not with us on that day.

+++ We remind our faithful that at the last Diocesan Council this past summer, the Diocesan Dues were raised, due to inflation and need, from the past \$50.00 per adult individual, eighteen years and older, to \$60.00 per year. Our envelope offering system still has the old amount on it, so please disregard that figure and make your offering according to the new mandated amount.

+++ 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.

+++ 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-end: Tithe Offering, \$[REDACTED]; Holy Day, \$[REDACTED], Candles, \$[REDACTED]; Food Coupons, \$[REDACTED]0; Kitchen, \$[REDACTED]; Pennies From Heaven, \$[REDACTED]; Candy Sales, \$[REDACTED]; Flowers, \$[REDACTED]; Building Fund, \$[REDACTED]; Major League Baseball Donation, \$[REDACTED]; Nativity of our Lord, \$[REDACTED]0, for a total of \$[REDACTED]. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 41 adults and 15 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, Bob Gorbich, +Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida, Robin Pasquino, Eleni Pallas, Kent Pasquino 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 ~~\$100,715.00~~. 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 check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

+++ Be certain your child attends the spiritual formation classes held each Sunday following the Divine Liturgy. We make a serious attempt to share the love of our Lord with all.

+++ Please be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or 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 ~~\$100,000~~ on this project to date!

+++ We invite those who pledged support for the Building Fund when building is about to begin, to consider redeeming their pledges as we are preparing to apply to Millstone Township for the variance and Building Permit.

+++ Please remember we are now in the Nativity Fast. We ask our faithful to offer up their sacrifices of food in fasting to the Lord that He bless our efforts in the Building Program. Please also pray for the peace of God among all people on earth.

+++ Everyone is invited to join us at the Nativity Reception following the Midnight Liturgy and the morning Liturgy as well. It is an opportunity to greet one another in grace of the Lord's birth.

+++ We offer our parish faithful the blessed opportunity to recognize and acknowledge the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord is the birthday of our God in the flesh among us. Please remember it is his birthday, his celebration and his feast day in which it is our privilege to participate. We invite all to express their gratitude and devotion by offering at least \$50.00 on the holyday offering taken after the gospel reading. The second collection is for regular expenses.

+++ Our heartfelt thanks are extended to the five generous souls who came Friday morning in the gross cold and removed all our belongings from Millstone to the rectory along with a number of items from the hall. We invoke on them the choicest grace of heaven for their devoted and conscientious love of our blessed Orthodox faith.

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!

## Pirohi Volunteers

Father Lucas 215-862-9227  
Pani Lucas 215-862-9227  
Kyra Choti 609-397-7281  
Joseph Choti 609-397-7281  
Nadya Choti 609-397-7281  
Elizabeth Simon 609-397-7281  
Deacon Kenneth 732-845-0873  
Diaconisa Cindy 732-845-0873  
Robert Gorbich 732-780-1619  
Eleanor Korba 732-845-5304  
Betty Samaris 732-868-9468  
Michael Garcia 732-780-6359  
Marla Garcia 732-780-6359

Subdeacon Daniel 732-845-4715  
Marilyn Korba 732-845-4715  
Rachel Korba 732-845-4715  
Eleanor Korba 732-845-5304  
Betty Samaris 732-866-9468  
Mary Demyan 732-929-3051  
Steve Demyan 732-929-3051  
Nina Harrison 215 862-9227  
Robin Pasquino 732-780-7914  
Maria Pashos 732-833-1342  
Frank Pashos 732-833-1342  
Anna Zacharyczuk 732-780-0169

Jan 9, March 6, May 1

Feb 6, Apr 17, June 12

Bake Sale March 19, 20

May 29.

Thursday Before

Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Eleni  
Pallas, Joan Henry, Debra Szmaida,  
Betty Samaris, Eleanor Korba and  
Anna Zacharyczuk

# Living Out the Truths of His Name

What's in a name? In a faith predicated on the Word of St. John's Gospel, everything! God's revelation to us in Scripture emphasizes the power of everything to do with language and if we read the Old and New Testaments with an eye for acts of naming, the meaning of names, and their conferral on newly-borns, especially as well, name changes of the sort experienced when a man or woman enters monastic life, God's goodness and the blessing of divine salvation come into focus.

One of the first object lessons in Scripture teaches the authority associated with naming. Our heavenly Father brings the freshly created livestock, wild animals and birds to Adam for him to baptize with names, a potent symbol of our responsibility for the earth and all its creatures. Later, the name Abraham, for "father (*ahh*) of a multitude (*raham*)," represents the divine calling of this first Hebrew patriarch of the Chosen People. Then Jacob (the "heal grabber," he who will "trip you up" cheats his brother Esau out of his birthright, but at Peniel, the trickster wrestles with a significantly unnamed, mysterious and powerful heavenly creature who then renames Jacob "Israel," or *yisra'el* in the Hebrew, from *sara*, "he wrestles with" and *El*, "God." The new moniker suggests this Hebrew leader has come to grips with himself and his identity in God and will now lead a holy life, recognizing always that he is created in the image of God.

Something similar happens to a mercurial fisherman named Simon (from the Hebrew *Shim'on* for "hearing"). He seems open to and swayed by whatever he may be "hearing" or "listening"

to at the moment, as his later betrayal of Jesus shows, but after Jesus renames Simon “Peter” he does become the “rock” or “stone” of pre-eminent and exemplary faith upon which the Church of Christ is built, according to the gospel of St. Matthew. Biblical authors are also keen to emphasize that the meaning of the common Jewish name Jesus originates in *Yeshua*, for “God saves.”

To ancient minds a word is no mere, shallow, hollow label. A name more than identifies a person to the world; it is seen as mysteriously participating in the essence of whatever it represents; it is what it symbolizes. Words connect visible, specific people and things with the invisible, universal reality and truth of which they silently witness and speak. They are identifiers of the inner soul, a concept long lost in western thinking, no doubt a reason why parents today label their children with such weird names. Therefore, when poetic John names Jesus the “Word” in the first chapter of his gospel, the words themselves in that phrase, “the Word” are left to be the “Logos,” “Jesus,” “Love” in an immediate mystical way perhaps lost on our modern imperceptible-to-mystery minds.

On the eighth day our Lord is taken to the temple and is named for our benefit. His name identifies his vocation in life in this world. The name of his mother Mary identified with the Hebrew word meaning *bitterness* shows her as a stalwart and brave woman whose heart will be pierced with sadness according to the prophecy of the just Simeon when the Lord is brought to the temple on the fortieth day. Indeed, her entire life is associated in this word as she witness the vilification and final destiny which He endures for the sake of our salvation.

The son of the foster-father Joseph, which means in Hebrew, “God will give you more,” a phrase expressing his gratitude to God for this infant child, in addition to others he has naturally fathered in a previously widowed marriage. It is this child, however which will provide for him the fulfillment of his earthly life from the loving generous God who always “gives more.” The foster-father is reminded of his great and good spiritual legacy because it is also the name of Jacob’s favorite son, who learning humility and forgiveness, matures into a great leader in Egypt, a unifier during difficult famine years (Genesis 41).

The gifts of our heavenly Father to us are often called “blessings,” and the parents of the divine Child are always reminded by their Son of the unending nature of God’s openhandedness. Although our heavenly Father shows his love to us daily by presenting us with many good blessings, they are easy to overlook and take for granted. But having a name that means “Saviour” is in itself a blessed prompt to be grateful. Thus in the name given our Lord, a constant reminder is made to all of us of the way community is made possible when there is harmony between the divine and the ordinary.

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## The Feast of the Word Becoming Flesh

“Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give” Matthew 10: 6 – 8.

In our Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly Father achieved the perfect synthesis of God and human. God gave humanity the vision of its wholeness and totality and assured us that we can be at home within that vision. That is what this season of the Nativity Fast calls us to recognize and therefore to live. The incarnation of Jesus demonstrates that our heavenly Father meets us where we are if we but repent and change, if we but not only confess Christ on our lips, but live him by faith response to his first-shown love. It assures us that we do not have to leave the world or relinquish our humanity in order to know, love and serve our God, but very simply that we must turn from evil. In the birth of the God-man, we have been consecrated in truth, so we are sent into the world to continue the saving pattern of embodiment in Christ.

We tend to fear incarnation precisely because it makes our faith response so real, so particular, so worldly. We prefer to express our religious profession on the level of the word, yet the pattern our Lord introduces us to is word becoming flesh, profession on our lips becoming Christian living. The great lie is that redemption can happen apart from incarnation and this we label the “scandal of particularity.” For the believer, power is always hidden in powerlessness, just as our God is hidden in a poor baby born in a manger in Bethlehem.

We may want the spiritual without the flesh, we may want the cosmic without the concrete, but if the Word is ever to be loved and shared, we must assume embodiment, making God’s values our own and permitting them to guide the activity of our daily lives, which is always concrete, emphatic and ordinary. There God is perfectly hidden and perfectly revealed in the totality of our daily response to his love.

Jesus sent the disciples into the world to carry on his ministry of love. We are inadequate, by ourselves, to do what He did, what the disciples did in imitation of his life, but with God’s grace, all things become possible.

“In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ It was of him that the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “A voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths”” Matthew 3: 1 – 3.

So during this sacred time we must remember everything because memory is the basis of both pain and rejoicing and we cannot have one without other. We are not quick to heal all the memories, our



sinful past, unless that means also feeling their effects deeply and taking them all into our salvation history. Our God calls us to suffer the whole of reality, to remember particularly the good along with the bad so that the good is appreciated, so that the good of God's coming among us is never relegated to an obscure dark mysterious past. This is the course of the journey toward new sights and new hope. Memory creates a readiness for salvation, an emptiness to receive and be filled with redeeming love and a fullness to enjoy it.

Strangely enough it seems much easier to remember the hurts, the failures, the rejections, but in a seeming love of freedom our heavenly Father allows us to be vulnerable to evil. And until we have learned to see evil comes to us easily and can hold us in its grips we will not appreciate the value of the coming of our God in the flesh among us.

Yet, only in an experience and remembering of the good do we have the power to stand against death, to recall with perfect humility that our God loves us so much He assumes our frail flesh to redeem us. Baruch tells Jerusalem, you must "rejoice that you are remembered by God." In that remembrance we have new sight and the evil can be absolved and blotted out now that we have the spiritual wherewithal to overcome it in the Christ Child.

We must remember that we and the world we live in is yet imperfect so that we can recall God's saving power to be fortified by a hope in new world, both inner and outer, that will be transformed by the activity of God's saving grace in us.

"Here comes your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing" Isaiah 35: 4 – 6.

Finally, then the purpose of the holy time is to continually permit to reverberate what we are told at our baptism, that we have finally been adopted from our separation and incorporated into the hidden mystery once again of the Blessed Trinity. It takes all our lives to believe our baptism. We do not have to earn our place; we already have it; all that is necessary is that we continually maintain it. We must agree that we have the divine nature in us because we are children of our God.

Where else did we come but from God? What was once inside of God is now outside of God and it is us, human beings created in his likeness, always laboring to cooperate with his freely bestowed grace that we become like him in word and deed. Our blessed faith announces it again and we are blessed and fortunate under heaven to hear it and believe it and implement it. We then become the announcers of the Good News by our lifestyle; we proclaiming the sonship and daughterhood of our Creator God.

Confused souls turn everything around. Some people spend their whole lives trying and thinking they can earn what they already have, trying to be worthy of God. We cannot get worthy; we are worthy; we must recognize it and live it. The primary things that initially separate us from our heavenly Father is the belief that we are separated, so we live like we are separated!

The Nativity Fast is a time particularly when we proclaim with boldness that we belong to God, that we cannot earn God's love because we are utterly dependant on God for what we need most, but God is always ready to give us what we need, not necessarily what we want. For our part, then, we have to retune ourselves to responding to him in his prescribed way so that when we ask in faith, we can grow more and more in trust and hope.

Enfleshed in us is the gift of salvation and if we recall and remember all that He does for us, we can in all truth remain his faithful sons and daughters!



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Adorn yourself, O Bethlehem.  
Open your gates, O Eden.  
Enter, O Magi, and see salvation swaddled in a crib.  
Behold the star shining above the cave;  
it announces the life-giving Lord  
who saves the human race.  
—*verses from Vespers of the feast of Saint Andrew*

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## Letting The Word Of God Speak

*The centurion said in reply, "Lord I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed..." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Amen, I say to you, in no one else in Israel have I found such faith" Matthew 8: 8, 10.*

It is fundamental Orthodox theology that love precedes knowledge. We truly know that only which we love. When we stand back analyzing and coolly calculating, we will never really know. It is only in stepping out into the arena and giving ourselves to a person that a person can speak to us. Love precedes understanding. We do not look forward to receiving something in return.

Take a leap of faith, of love, of self-giving wherein you allow our heavenly Father to speak to you. Dispose yourself by his grace to be used as his instrument. We cannot prove to anyone with any kind of earthly logic or by any bit of persuasive philosophy that this is, for example the Word of God revealed to us, that God exists or that Jesus is Lord. But we can call out and invite ALL to step out, to trust, to love. Say, "Lord, if you are in fact my Lord, then show yourself in my life and speak to my heart." Then pursue the directives of your heart and soul.

Lord, Jesus, how many times while insisting I am a believer in need of healing and restoration, that my faith in your promises to your chosen people of which I am part. Sometimes I hold back, waiting to better understand first before I fully commit myself to your entire teaching to love and live successfully in your kingdom. Help me to turn around this holy time of the Nativity Fast, to love first and then seek understanding which I believe in your good time will be provided me.

Enrich me with a deep and profound faith that I will do your will without questioning or examining its beneficial purpose. So endow me that I respond to all occasions when my faith, my insight, my sincere and acceptable prayer will bring about a change for the better in myself and those whom I so ardently love. Grant me the gift of patience that I hopefully await the manifestation of your will in this life, that I do not hold back the inspiration of your infused grace and decide to do nothing but indulge in self-serving activity and the opportunity you provide for your will to be made known is utterly lost, never to be regained. Permit my faith response to your first shown love be the time and place you choose to be glorified Let your word speak through me!.

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## Name Upon Name

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*  
Matthew 1: 1.

Parents generally have specific and worthwhile reasons for each name they assign to us. After all, it is our name that creates our outlook on life because it describes values and treasured insights which are notable.

We also believe our heavenly Father had specific reasons for the names He included in the beginning of the gospel of St. Matthew the Evangelist which is prescribed reading for the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday prior to the Nativity of our Lord.

It may seem and sound like a long, boring list of meaningless names, but those names serve at least two serious purposes. First, they provide the framework by which true Hebrew believers could establish their family roots and maintain a family religious purity and integrity against outside, watering-down influences. Second, the names reflect the sovereign work of our God. They reveal the dealings of our heavenly Father with his chosen people in the past, which then resulted in the birth of the Messiah. In addition they provide insight into the direct lineage of Christ with the centerline of salvation history, coming to us with the blood line of all the participants and notables of Old Testament preparation and participation. It was because of the activity of these progenitors and forbears in the flesh of the Lord that the Messiah was destined to come among us.

The Lord used all kinds of people in Jesus' lineage: farmers, kings, a prostitute, adulterers, liars, even finally the ever Virgin Mary who endowed him with humanity in such a way He is able to redeem mankind. When we look over and read and ponder this listing, how overwhelmed we are because it reminds us of God's faithfulness. Even from an ongoing list of sinners and often wrong-doers, God can bring something good which will make life for man much improved upon the face of the earth.

As we celebrate this Sunday of the Forefathers prior to the Nativity of our Lord, we are reminded by faith in Christ of his faithfulness to each of us and his eager and ardent desire to bring about his purposes, even through the limitations and singular inadequacy of each of us. Christ can and does overcome the world and its self-imposed limitations.

# Did You Know That ...

**...we find rest in those who love us and we provide a resting place in ourselves for those who love us?**

**...God continually tells and acts like He loves us?**

**...when love reigns the impossible is attained?**

**...there is no limitation to love?**

**...one gets bold for Christ when one is sure Christ loves him?**

**...love is the tender look that becomes habitual?**

**...love is the irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired?**

**...love conquers all?**

**...prayer is an open line to heaven?**

**...to follow the Lord we must walk with the Lord?**

**...it is only Christ who can create unity out of diversity?**

**...it is true we may face situations beyond our reserves, but never beyond God's resources?**

**...in every desert of trial, our God has an oasis of comfort?**

**...they witness best who witness with their lives and their lips?**

**...Christ is the only bridge over the chasm of sin?**

**...he who trusts in the Lord shall have mercy surrounding him?**

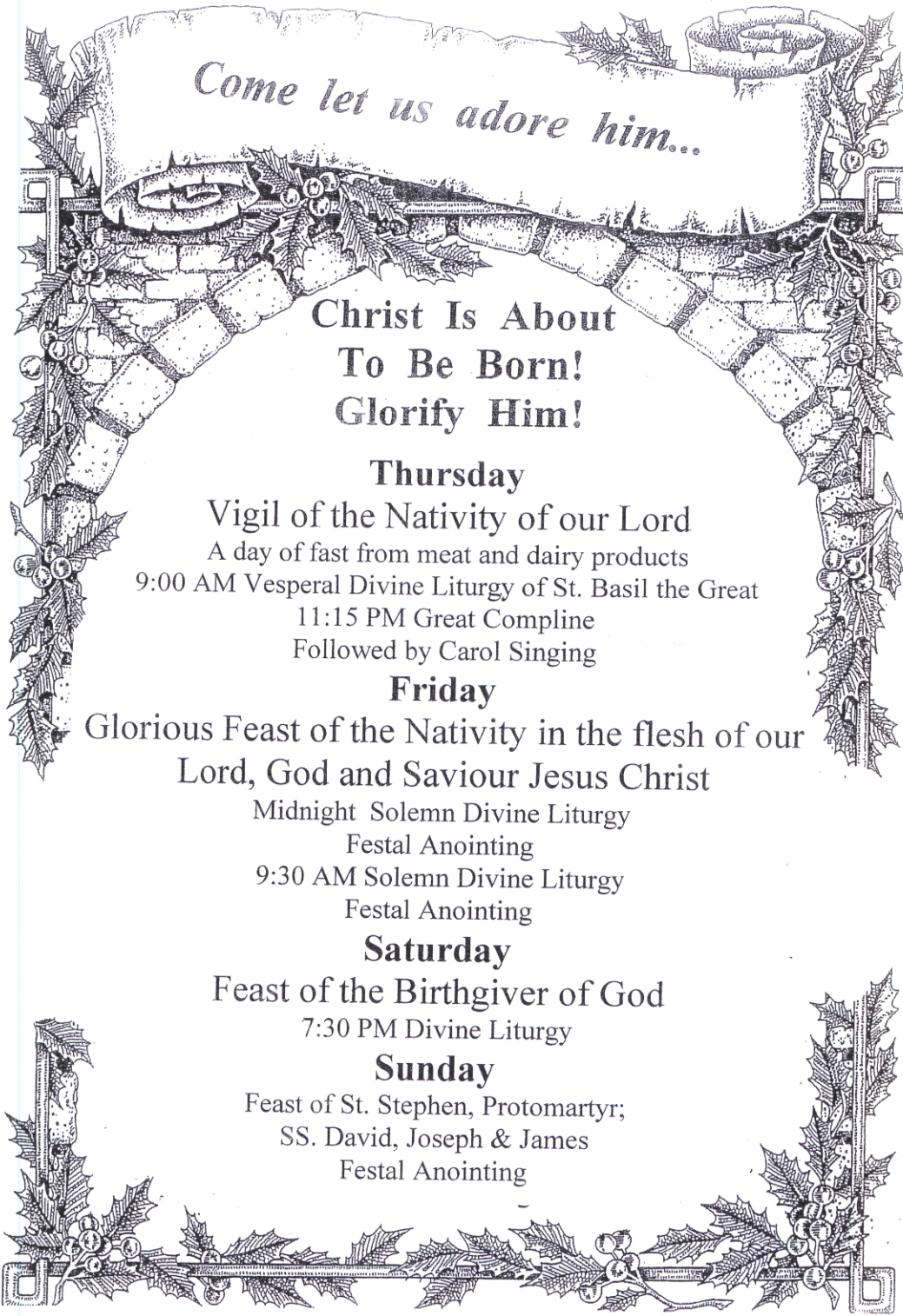
**...it is far better to be poor and walk by faith than to be wealthy and walk only by sight?**

**...if we wish to give our life stability, we must hold on to the promises of our God?**



WE  
AWAIT THE LORD'S  
COMING





*Come let us adore him...*

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

**Thursday**

Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord

A day of fast from meat and dairy products

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

11:15 PM Great Compline

Followed by Carol Singing

**Friday**

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

Midnight Solemn Divine Liturgy

Festal Anointing

9:30 AM Solemn Divine Liturgy

Festal Anointing

**Saturday**

Feast of the Birthgiver of God

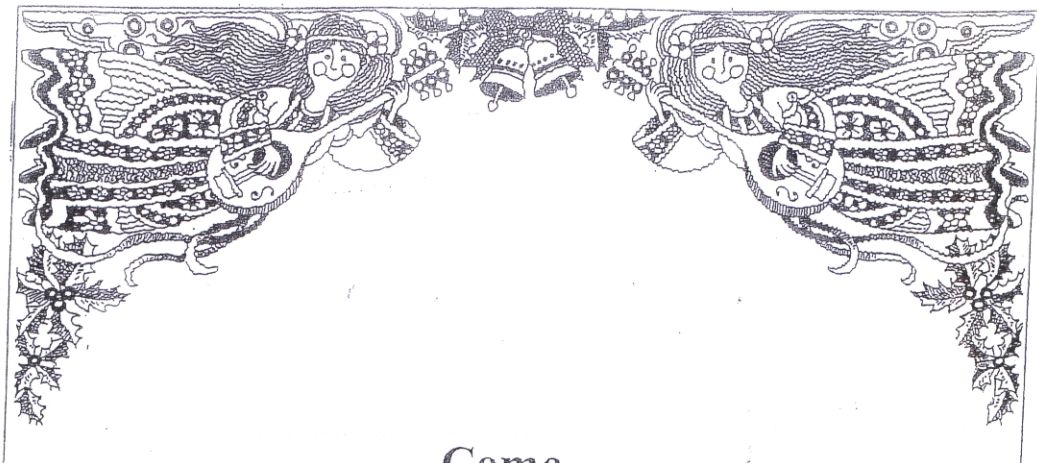
7:30 PM Divine Liturgy

**Sunday**

Feast of St. Stephen, Protomartyr;

SS. David, Joseph & James

Festal Anointing

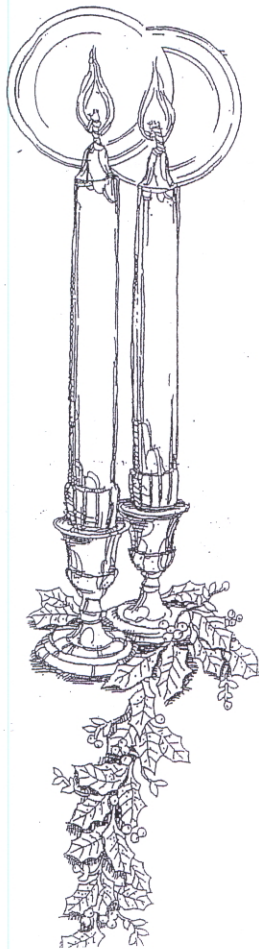
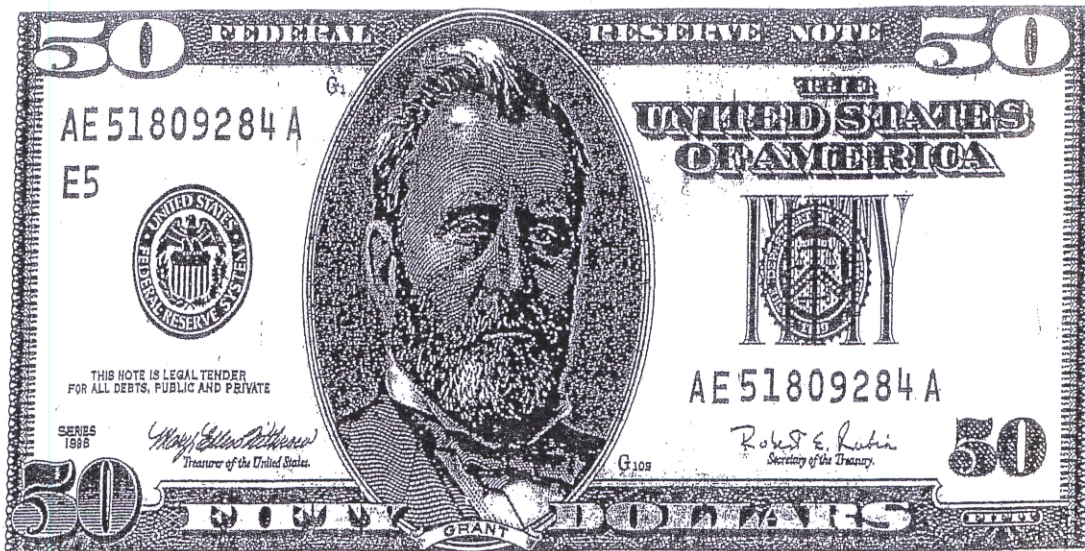


**Come**

**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!

## HOW DEEP ARE OUR SPIRITUAL ROOTS?

Trees are marvelous aspects of God's creation! They come in so many varieties: the powerful giant redwoods ... the sturdy oaks ... the abundant fruit-bearers. Yes, they are all so different yet they all have one important thing in common: their deep, strong roots. When we speak of our "roots," more often than not we are referring to where we were born and raised, or perhaps to the source of our cultural heritage. This term, however, might be best applied in describing our "spiritual connection" with our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Christians who are strongly rooted in Christ, indeed, are powerful and sturdy, bearing fruit with all their labors. Like trees drawing nourishment through their roots from the earth in which they are grounded, Christians are nurtured by planting themselves firmly in the "good soil" which is our Savior.

Christ Himself proclaimed: "I am the Vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for without Me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:5-6) The meaning here should be obvious to us. We must attach ourselves to the Lord if we expect to accomplish anything worthwhile in life. The Church Fathers tell us that these words of our Lord carry great meaning. The "Vine" and its "branches" constitute the Church, united by Christ. True life flows from the "Vine" to the "branches," and if they are cut off from the "Vine," they will be spiritually dead.

Church history is filled with examples of pious people who sought this connection to Christ. They could have put down their roots elsewhere, choosing their "nourishment" from other sources. Doing so certainly might have meant temporary fortune or fame for them. But they understood that only Jesus could provide permanent sustenance. So how strong are our spiritual roots? May we strive to live our lives based on the premise proposed by St. Paul, who boldly proclaimed: "I can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens me." (Phil 4:13).