



The Light of Orthodoxy

ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WINTER 2018



The Nativity According to the Flesh of Our Lord God And Savior Jesus Christ

**May He
Who was born
In a cavern and
Lay in a man-
ger For our
Salvation sake,
Christ
Our true God,
Bless you this
Nativity Season
And in the
Coming
New Year
With every
Good thing.**

' And when the fullness of time was come, God sent His only-begotten Son' (Gal. 4:4), to save the human race. And when the ninth month had come after the archangel Gabriel appeared to the most holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying: 'Hail, thou that art highly favored... thou shalt conceive and bear a son' - at that time a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and there be inscribed. Therefore righteous Joseph came with the most holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal House of David. But, there being a great many people in that small city for the census, Joseph and Mary could not find a lodging in any house, and found shelter in a cave which the shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave the most holy Virgin gave birth to the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Bearing Him without pain, as He was conceived without sin of the Holy Spirit and not of man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling bands, worshipped Him as God and laid Him in a manger. 'Men righteous Joseph drew near and worshipped Him as the divine Fruit of a virgin womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshipped Him as Messiah and Savior. The shepherds had heard a multitude of angels singing: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men' (Lk 2:14). At that time there also came wise men from the East, led by a wonderful star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh, and worshipped Him as King of kings, offering Him their gifts (Mt 2: 11). Thus He came into the world Whose coming had been foretold by the prophets and Who was born in the way that they had prophesied: of the most holy Virgin, in the city of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no longer in Jerusalem a king of the tribe of Judah, but Herod the stranger was on the throne. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind that could not be performed by His servants. May His be eternal glory and praise! Amen.

Extracted from the Prologue written by St. Nicholi of Zicha.



What We Believe Part X

In the last installment of this series we discussed, what is known in theological language as, the fall. We saw how it was that the devil – the serpent in the account of the Garden of Eden – through some clever lies, deceived Adam and Eve into disobeying the command of God that they should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which stood in the center of the garden of Eden. At this point, it is useful to examine exactly what happened when they consummated their disobedience.

So what happened when they ate of the forbidden fruit? We are told that, "... the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. (Genesis 3:7) " So what was the big deal about seeing each other naked? After all, up until that point they were naked, and saw each other as such and thought nothing about it. Up to that point their nakedness was simply a fact of life. There was no particular notion of "goodness" or "badness" attached to it. It was only after they were given the vision of good and evil which came as a result of the knowledge of good and evil that they perceived that their mutual nakedness could act as a temptation. That is, there were bad ways as well as good ways to respond to this vision of nakedness as nakedness. So, what did they do? "They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." But then, "they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. (Genesis 3:8-10)" In these few verses we have the essence of sin summarized. Adam and Eve are told, "Don't do this, because if you do there will be dire consequences." But, they do it anyway, and immediately understand that what they have done is wrong. Because they know that they have done something wrong, they don't want to admit it, and, above all, they don't want to face the consequences so they try to hide. It is at this point the conversation becomes very interesting. God asks, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. Genesis 3:11-13" At this point the man has his chance to clear (and clean) his conscience by admitting to and, being truly sorry, repenting for what he has done. However, he instead points his finger at the woman, and, at the same time, reminds God, "you gave her to me." In other words it's God's fault for giving him the woman who did the dirty deed. What could have been the moment of repentance, is, instead, the moment of confirmation in sin – "it's your fault, because you gave me the one who made me do it because she had to listen to the snake." The result is that the first humans are put out of paradise, and a limit is put on their lives so that such evil cannot spread infinitely. The stage is set to complete our humanity, by re-establishing our connection by restoring the image in which we were created.

Thus it is, that Jesus "for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Virgin Mary, and was made man." What this sentence of the creed is saying, is that God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, is made man. In the words of the fourth Gospel. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.. (Jn. 1:14)" He takes upon Himself our humanity, and through His own obedience gives us the strength to obey, and to repent when we fail. In His person He restores each of us through our participation in His humanity which begins at our baptism when we die and rise again in Christ, and nourish ourselves with His divine life when we receive Holy Communion.

ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH
AND WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA (OCA)
OFFICIAL CHANGES

DANIELS, ARCHPRIEST LAWRENCE, is released from his duties as Rector of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, Jeannette, PA, effective October 6, 2018, and granted retirement. He is attached in retirement to the altar at the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA.

KOPCHA, ARCHPRIEST JOHN, is appointed Dean of the Southwest Deanery effective December 7, 2017. All of his other duties as Rector of the St. Andrew Church, Mingo Junction, Ohio, remain the same.

KOPCHA, ARCHPRIEST JOHN, is released from his duties as Dean of the Southwest Deanery effective November 30, 2018. All of his other duties as Rector of the St. Andrew Church, Mingo Junction, Ohio, remain the same.

MEHOLICK, ARCHPRIEST MARK, is reappointed as Dean of the Eastern Deanery effective November 3, 2018. All of his other duties as Rector of the St. Nicholas Church, Du Bois, PA, and Saints Peter and Paul Church, Urey (Glen Campbell), PA, remain the same.

NELKO, PRIEST ANDREW P., is appointed Associate Dean of the Southwest Deanery effective December 7, 2017. All of his other duties as Acting Rector of the St. Nicholas Church, Weirton, WV, remain the same.

NELKO, PRIEST ANDREW P., who was Acting Rector, is appointed Rector of St. Nicholas Church, Weirton, WV, effective September 20, 2018.

NELKO, PRIEST ANDREW P., who was Associate Dean, is appointed Dean of the Southwest Deanery effective December 1, 2018. All of his other duties as Rector of the St. Nicholas Church, Weirton, WV, remain the same.

PEYKOV, PRIEST EVGENI, who was Acting Rector, is appointed Rector of St. Gregory Church, Homestead, PA, effective September 20, 2018.

SIMERICK, ARCHPRIEST MICHAEL, who was retired, is returned to the ranks of the active clergy. He is appointed Acting Rector of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist Church, Philipsburg, PA, effective September 20, 2018.

ZIATYK, ARCHPRIEST PAUL, retired, reposed in the Lord March 5, 2018. Memory Eternal!

Approved for distribution:

Archpriest William J. Evansky, Chancellor

Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania

Orthodox Church in America

(2018-11-15)

Holy Trinity (State College) Celebrates 25 Years of "Building Up the Church"

STATE COLLEGE, PA — Holy Trinity Church here celebrated "25 Years of Ministry" earlier this month. The parish dates its official beginning to 1993, when a small group of 16 people ventured out in faith to purchase the parish's current building at 119 South Sparks Street and commit to supporting a full-time priest. The theme of the day's celebration, which included a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and benefit luncheon, was "Building up the Church Beyond the Parish." It honored the many ways that current and former members of the community have contributed to the OCA and the Orthodox Church at large.

In addition to acknowledging the national and local church service of Archpriest John M. Reeves, Holy Trinity's first and only full-time priest who is retiring this December, dozens of clergy and ministers were recognized. This was particularly evident by the liturgy itself, in which more than 30 priests, deacons, missionaries, and monastics participated. Nearly all of them came into the Orthodox Faith through or were impacted in a significant way by the parish's outreaches, especially the Penn State Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF). Even His Eminence Archbishop Melchisedek—who presided at the liturgy and offered the opening remarks at the luncheon—first heard about what God was doing through the parish nearly two decades ago through an encounter he had as a monastic in Greece with one of the parish's alums (who was then a missionary and is now a full-time priest).

In addition to the parish alumni that were honored, the church's current staff and ministries were also highlighted. Father David Smith presented on behalf of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Holy Trinity's outreach in rural Pennsylvania, which is a model of the "Chapel of the Ease" concept that the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania is currently pioneering. (One of the Chapel's faithful, Evan Kerstetter was tonsured a reader that day.) Deacon Mark Oleynik, Director of Christian Education, was awarded the double orarion by Archbishop Melchisedek and proceeded to recognize the parish's commitment to the discipleship of Orthodox youth. Deacon Alexander Cadman, Director of Ministries and Chaplain of the Penn State OCF, was presented with a gramota for exemplary diaconal service by Abp. Melchisedek, and then showed appreciation for the parish's charitable partnerships. During the program, he announced that the luncheon's beneficiary, Holy Trinity's "Matthew 25" ministry, raised about \$15,000 for the underprivileged and malnourished in central Pennsylvania.



Holy Trinity (State College) Celebrates 25 Years of "Building Up the Church" Continued from pg. 4

Fr. John and Mka. Linda Reeves were honored by the Penn State OCF, Sunday School, and current and former parishioners for 37 years in active ministry to the Orthodox Church in America at the national, regional, and local levels. Holy Trinity is preparing itself for the end of this era, one marked by humble beginnings, consistent growth, and the spread of the Gospel. Fr. John's replacement will be appointed by Archbishop Melchisedek in the coming months. In his benediction, Fr. John exhorted attendees not to focus on him or the past, but rather on its core values, especially apostleship, and continue the parish's mission of sending people to contribute to the work of Christ and His Church.



DEACONS AWARDS

Holy Ghost Orthodox Church, Ambridge, PA was honored to have their two deacons, Fr. Dn. Matthew Stahoviak and Fr. Dn. Peter Ilchuk, receive the honor of wearing the deacon's double orarion. His Eminence, Archbishop MELCHISEDEK, presented this clergy award to Fr. Dn. Matthew during the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, October 28, 2018, at Holy Ghost Church and to Fr. Dn. Peter on November 3, 2018, at the Divine Liturgy that opened the 2018 Archdiocesan Assembly at the Holy Resurrection Church in Belle Vernon. This award was presented to them to honor their outstanding service and efforts to strengthen God's Holy Church in the parish, the diocese and/or nationally. AXIOS! We also offer our congratulations to their wives (Mat. Victoria Stahoviak and Mat. Danielle Ilchuk) as well as their children and family members who share in this joy.

ST. NICHOLAS VOLUNTEERS AT THE TABLE OF HOPE

Four months ago adult and teen members from St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Weirton, WV, began giving time and encouragement to individuals who benefit from a local community based organization, the Table of Hope. With the goal of feeding people, the Table of Hope opened its doors on April 23, 2012 and recently served the 50,000th meal to those in need. St. Nicholas now has a dedicated Wednesday each month were the faithful volunteer to help those who are less fortunate. The Table of Hope also wishes to add a member from St. Nicholas to their board to assist in developing and planning their program. Reverend Andrew P. Nelko, rector at St. Nicholas stated, "Orthodox Christians are encouraged to serve others and one of the most valuable ways to do this is to show them that we care. Volunteering may seem small but it is a critical piece in something much larger.....keeping St. Nicholas at the center of our spiritual, service and community life."



BLESSING OF FIRST RESPONDERS

Members of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, 604 Colliers Way, Weirton WV, held the first annual "Blessing of First Responders", on August 19, 2018. The purpose of the day was to say Thank You to our First Responders for the difficult job they do every day to protect and keep the community safe. It was a nice turnout with seven firemen, and five police officers, along with two firetrucks and five patrol cars were blessed. The day's agenda consisted of blessing these members of the police, firefighters and their vehicles, remembering those men and women who have departed this life while putting their life on the line for us, and it finished off with a luncheon in the church hall following the service.



ST. GREGORY ORTHODOX CHURCH WELCOMES THE NUNS OF TRANSFIGURATION MONASTERY

On Sunday, November 4, 2018, Mother Christophora, Mother Seraphima and Sister Christine from the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, PA, visited St. Gregory's Orthodox Church, Homestead, to sing the responses to the Divine Liturgy. It was their first visit to the parish. Mother Christophora spoke about monastics and life at the Monastery. She extended an invitation to everyone to visit the Monastery



ARCHPRIEST PAUL SUDA RETIRES AS VA CHAPLAIN

After 38 years of service Fr. Paul Suda has retired from the active chaplaincy of the Veterans Administration. On November 28, the VA recognized him with a certificate of appreciation for his 38 years of service.

THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOXY

is the Quarterly Newsletter of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, Orthodox Church in America. News, and photos can be submitted by e-mail to

hieromonkpatrick@msn.com

or by mail to Igumen Patrick, 105 S. 19th St.,
Pittsburgh, PA 15203.

NEW ICONOGRAPHY PROJECTS AT ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH McKEES ROCKS, PA

Archpriest Theodore Jurewicz is the Iconographer doing the work. This is year six of the ten year project at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, McKees Rocks PA.



UPDATE ON THE ONGOING WORK OF THE ST. CYRIL OF WHITE LAKE FOOD PANTRY

The St. Cyril of White Lake Food Pantry is open Thursdays from 5:45pm to 6:45pm. Everyone who seeks help is helped, and patrons are provided with three days+ of food. This year, the Food Pantry, has seen a large number of families weekly, with this number ranging from 60 to 100+ per week.. This number has remained high because of the closure of several food pantries around us, and the weakened economy. Each household is served through your generosity and receives food for three+ full days of meals. [Note: The average real cost of food provided at any one time to a household of three is \$44.00. This number is higher than last year due to the increase in prices at the stores] We have been blessed with generous donors and volunteers who have helped maintain this sacred ministry of love. Thank you and God bless you.

Donations can be sent to:

St. Cyril of White Lake Orthodox Food Pantry
105 S. 19th St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

OUR THANKS AND GOD'S BLESSINGS

To **Mediterra Bakehouse** which provides bread weekly to the Food Pantry, as well as a host of other things throughout the year.

To the **Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania (OCA)**, **St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral**, **Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Cathedral**, **St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral**, **Intercession of the Virgin Russian Orthodox Church**, **St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church**, **Holy Ghost Orthodox Church**, **St. Mary Orthodox Church**, **St. Michael Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church**, **Holy Dormition Russian Orthodox Church**, **St. Nicholas Orthodox Church**, and to **Animal Friends** (for pet food donation monthly).

To the **Many Donors, Volunteers and Parishes** whose faithful donations of time, prayers, and money have made it possible weekly for this Food Pantry to function.

ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH SOUTHSIDE PITTSBURGH ADDS NEW ICONS

As part of St. Mary Orthodox Church ongoing restoration project, new Icons have been added to the church choir loft. The Icons of the choir of saints have been added around the stained glass window of the Theotokos—the unfading blossom.



Over the small windows in the choir loft medalion Icons of the Great Martyr Barbara and the Martyred King Edward of England.



In the front of the Church candlestands have been added to restore the use of beeswax candles



STUFFED WITH LOVE

On Thanksgiving Day, St. Mary Orthodox Church in Southside Pittsburgh, together with the Pittsburgh area Rotary Clubs and the Pittsburgh Police produced 3400 Thanksgiving Dinners which were delivered by the Pittsburgh Police to area residents in need. This effort annually attracts hundreds of volunteers from throughout the community, including numerous Orthodox Christians. Among the Orthodox Churches represented were St. Mary Orthodox Church—Pittsburgh, St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church—Cannonsburg, Holy Virgin Orthodox Church—Carnegie, St. Gregory Orthodox Church—Homestead; St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral—Allison Park, Mission of St. Moses the Black—Pittsburgh, and St. John Carpatho Russian Orthodox Church—Pittsburgh



What Kind of 21st Century Orthodox Parish Do We Prefer?

As you consider your parish's

response to the Archdiocese' request for each parish to undertake a meaningful Parish Development Initiative, explore these two models of Orthodox parishes in America.

Which parish will be blessed with growth?

Which is a model of decline? Of burying its talents?

Which is a model of vibrancy and hope – providing a return to the Master?

In what areas can we improve as a parish?

Parish A	Parish B
We exist for us and our needs.	We exist to proclaim Christ; To do His work in the world and bring others to Him. We have a sense of mission and outreach.
We are Orthodox by birth & heritage	We are Orthodox by choice
We are trying to reproduce “Old World” Orthodoxy. Ancient & Foreign	We are bringing Orthodoxy to America. Local & Indigenous Apostolic, Authentic & Alive
Let's attract people “like us” Ethnic/demographic consistency	We serve all in our locale. Openness, Increased diversity
Complacent & comfortable	Seeking & Reaching
Good enough	Sense of excellence; Offering our best
Stern & sober	Cheerful & Hopeful
Water it down; Make it easier	Meaningful, Understandable, & Challenging
Sunday Liturgy	Active Weekly/Annual Worship Cycle
Social Events & Clubs	Social Events & <u>Ministry</u> Charitable Outreach: Time & \$
We don't do it that way! Won't work!	Let's try it!
Control & Power; Rules & Battles	Collaboration, Discernment & dialogue
No risk Conserving; protecting; maintaining	Hopeful intelligent risk taking “investing”; creating; “building”
“Ownership” Voting; majority; “Robert's Rules”	“Stewardship” Consensus; conciliarity
Dues, minimum, equal share Compulsory, fund raising, “appeals”	Proportional, meaningful amounts, Personal generosity; from the heart
Free agents; Autonomy; Independence; Optional participation	Constitutive element of diocese Shared responsibility

Yes! We Want to Grow!

By Joseph Kormos, Archdiocesan Parish Development Ministry Leader

In ten years of working with Orthodox parishes we can't remember encountering a parish that did not say it *wanted to grow* numerically. "How long do you want your parish to live? Forever! Do you want your church to grow? Yes!"

Yet growing numerically is *not* straightforward. As we read in the epistle to the Corinthians, "I (Paul) planted, Apollos watered but God gave the increase." (1. Cor. 4:6.) We are not directly in *control* of numerical parish growth.

Instead we are asked to spiritually prepare and water the soil as the Body of Christ. This spiritual growth encourages us to lay a foundation for future generations, to grow in our faith, to share our faith, and to welcome others into the church. With such Christ centered effort God may, *eventually*, bless us with an increase.

Well Worn Grooves – For the Past

Though we *say* we want to grow, most parishes are in well worn-grooves. We 'do what we've' always done.' Sunday liturgy. Picnics. Fundraising sales. Dues. Men's and Women's Clubs. Recreating the 'good old days'. As some once said "If the past arrives we'll be prepared."

This level and type of commitment may have enabled parishes to maintain themselves in times of large families whose children grew up and *stayed home*. In today's mobile, 'church unfriendly' society helping our parish to flourish requires opening our doors to non-Orthodox and Orthodox new to the area. These are people who likely have different needs and expectations.

A 'New' Model and a Nudge

Without over simplifying, growing Orthodox parishes today are attracting new people with a model rooted in: Holiness, Sacraments, Service and Apostolic zeal. People are attracted to the Orthodox faith when they see energetic worship beyond Sunday, charitable ministry and budgets, open hospitality to strangers, serious generosity of time and treasure, warmth and love.

Most parishes in our Archdiocese are working, at their own pace, toward that "new" model. However the gravitational pull of "what we've always done" often holds us back.

Often we require a *nudge*.

Parish Development and Growth Committee

A new Archdiocesan Parish Development and Growth Committee has begun work with a goal of increasing the impact and footprint of our existing Parish Development ministry efforts. This team brings together clergy and laity experience from numerous Archdiocesan parishes – small and larger, growing and plateaued, newer and older, urban and rural - to shape future efforts of our Parish Development Ministry.

A Theme for Consistent Parish Effort

As our first action we've selected a two year "theme" (see box nearby) designed to stimulate and reinforce growth attitudes and Christ centered action within parishes across our Archdiocese. Our theme is broad enough for *any parish* to find an *opportunity* to expand its commitment to Living a Life in Christ.

Identify and Commit to an Action Project

With the identification of the theme we encourage *all parishes* to identify and undertake a serious initiative/project to strengthen their parish with *purposeful, intentional* effort.

Continued on pg. 12

Parish Development & Growth Committee
Rebecca Danchenko

Intercession of the Virgin Church, Carnegie PA

Chrisia Johnston

Holy Resurrection Church, Belle Vernon PA

Alexis Parshook

St. John the Baptist Church, New Kens. PA

Kira Meholic

St Nicholas Church, Dubois PA

Kristie Mertz

St Nicholas Church, McKees Rocks PA

Fr. George Johnson

St. John the Baptist Church, Conemaugh PA

Fr. Andrew Nelko

St. Nicholas Church, Weirton WV

Joe Kormos

Parish Development Ministry, Chairperson

Yes! We Want to Grow!

Continued from page 11

Making Hard Decisions on Our Future

Making an effort requires us to make the *hard decisions* necessary to build a parish that is actively facing the future. And to act upon those decisions.

One of the hard decisions is to simply *focus on one thing*. Trying to act on every opportunity or problem can't possibly work. A parish can't work on everything. We ask that each parish honestly consider their parish life in the theme areas of:

Growing in Faith: *Education, formation, worship and community building*

Sharing our Faith: *Proclaiming Christ in our life, words and service, In-person and online.*

Welcoming Others: *Showing hospitality to guests and strangers. "Moving over" for new ideas of parishioners with different needs and attitudes.*

Then select **ONE** important area of effort to be undertaken over the next 18-24 months.

What Can You Do?

If you are a parish priest take this opportunity to encourage and stimulate new effort. Talk with your parish council and various ministry groups.

If you are on the parish council, or an interested parishioner, make sure your parish participates. Undertake a serious parish conversation and identify your initiative. See the box nearby for discussion questions. Look at the article in this issue titled "What kind of parish do we prefer?" Once you select a project make it "official" by submitting your project on the Archdiocesan website.

Help is Available

More information is available via the Archdiocesan website in the form of FAQ documents and potential project ideas.

Also, the Parish Development committee can help in the project selection process and will provide tools, practices, encouragement and suggestions for any parish.

In the words of C.S. Lewis, "*The greatest danger is the illusion that all is well.*"

Most parishes wait too long.

You Can Do This!

Building a Bright Parish Future:

Growing in Faith, Sharing Our Faith, Welcoming Others

QUESTIONS FOR PARISH DISCUSSION

General

Of the focus areas below which area would be most beneficial for us to focus on to establish a bright(er) parish future?

What is our parish good at? Can we become "great" at what we're "good" at?

Education/Growing in Faith

What are the benefits of a deeper understanding of what it means to be an Orthodox Christian?

What questions am I asked by friends about our faith? Am I satisfied with my answers?

Is reading or attending classes the only way to grow in our faith? What other methods/approaches can help our parish to grow in faith?

Sharing Our Faith

How do we as a parish communicate who we are and what we stand for? Can we improve this?

Do our neighbors know that they are welcome in our church? Or, are we seen only as a source of ethnic food?

Do we invite friends, relatives and neighbors to church?

Hospitality

How many guests visited our parish in the last (e.g.) 6 months? Was that more or less than the previous period?

What do we think they were looking for? How would they evaluate that? Did they return?

What are the experiences of a visitor to our parish?

Is our parish welcoming and friendly? In what ways yes? No? What conversational approaches can we learn for welcoming inquirers?

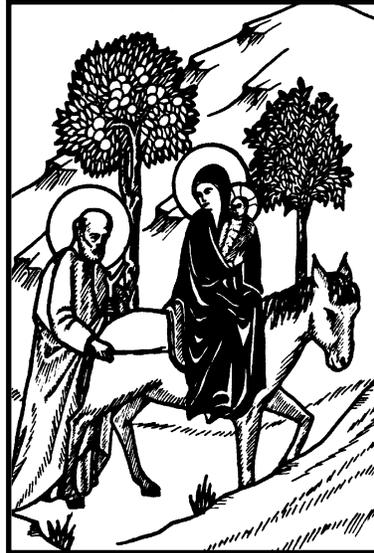
Do we effectively help new parishioners to find a role that fits their gifts and talents?



ON THE THREE WISE MEN

The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshipped by shepherds and wise men from the East - the simplest and the wisest of this world. In our day also, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Savior are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Twisted simplicity and crazed wisdom have always been enemies of Christ's divinity and of His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the East? This question was closely investigated by St. Dimitri of Rostov. He asserts that they were kings of small regions or groups of towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were greatly learned in astrology. The wonderful star that heralded the birth of the new King appeared to them. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus; that is, at the time when the most holy Mother of God conceived Him. They spent these nine months in studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in traveling. They arrived in Bethlehem very shortly after the birth of the Savior of the world. One of them was called Melchior. He was old, withered, with long white hair and beard. He brought the Lord the gift of gold. The second man was called Caspar; ruddy of face, young and beardless. He brought the Lord the gift of frankincense. The third was called Balthazar; black-skinned and heavily bearded. He brought the Lord the gift of myrrh. After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan and from Milan to Cologne. It can be added that these three wise men represented the three chief races of men that descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Persian represented Japheth, the Arabian Shem and the Egyptian Ham. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshipped our incarnate Lord and God.

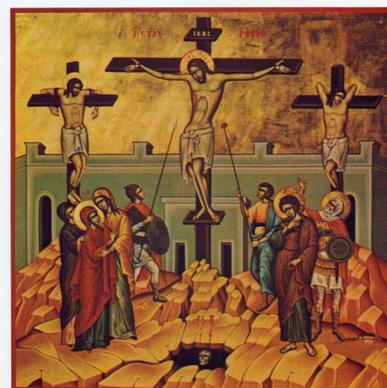
On The Three Wise Men was adapted from *The Prolgue of Ochrid*, Vol. 4 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic, Dec. 25 through Dec. 29.

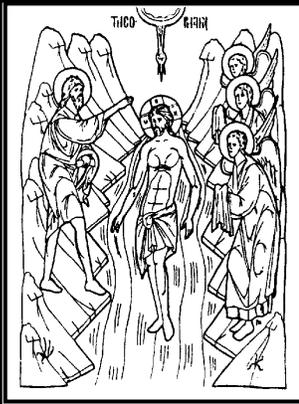


THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT: The Two Thieves Crucified With Our Lord

A story of the divine Christ-Child: when the holy family was fleeing before Herod's sword to Egypt, brigands leapt out into the road to steal what they

could. Righteous Joseph was leading the donkey on which were some few possessions and on which the most holy Mother of God was riding with her Son at her breast. The robbers seized the donkey, meaning to lead it away. At that moment, one of the robbers went across to the Mother of God to see what she had at her breast. Seeing the Christ-Child, the robber marveled at His beauty and said in wonder: 'If God were to take human flesh Himself, He would not be more beautiful than this child!', and the robber told his fellows to take nothing from these travelers. Full of gratitude to this kindly robber, the Mother of God said to him: 'This Child will reward you richly for having spared Him today'. Thirty three years later, this same robber was crucified for his wrongdoing on the right of Christ's cross. His name was Dysmas, while the name of the robber on the left was Gestas. Looking at Christ the Lord, crucified in His innocence, Dysmas repented of his whole life and, while Gestas reviled the Lord, Dysmas rebuked his fellow-robber, saying: 'He has done no evil'. Dysmas is, then, that penitent thief to whom the Lord said: 'Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise' (Lk.23:41-43). Thus the Lord rewarded with Paradise him who had spared Him in childhood.





ON THE BLESSING OF HOMES

The tradition of blessing homes during at Holy Theophany is one of special beauty and significance. It is not simply a sentimental tradition without meaning, nor is it a custom whose meaning has been forgotten, like an old friend whose face we remember, but whose impact on our life has been forgotten.

When an Orthodox Christian believer moves into a new home, he has the priest dedicate his new home as the abode of a follower of Christ. The priest and the family ask that God, the source of all goodness and the Giver of every perfect gift, bless this new house and all that is within it; recalling that Jesus Christ, His Son, came to bring Salvation to all, even as He brought Salvation to the house of Zacchaeus; the priest prays that the Holy Spirit may abide in the house, guiding those who dwell in it in the paths of righteousness.

On the Feast of Holy Theophany we rededicate our home for its original purpose, just as we must periodically rededicate our life to Christ. We do it especially on this Feast because it is on this day that we remember in the Church Year the coming of Christ who began His Earthly Ministry when He descended into Jordan River to be baptized by St. John the Forerunner and Baptist. He enters again into our lives reminding us that we must "repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."

An Orthodox Christian must dedicate not only himself and his house to the Lord, but even his daily work and all his efforts as well. All things are to be done to the glory of God. That is why in the Orthodox Church, not only religious objects, such as icons, crosses, churches and vestments, are blessed, but also homes, fields, animals and all objects which are used in our daily life for the good of man. In this the Orthodox Church expresses Her faith that the Holy Spirit's sanctifying action extends over the whole of creation for our salvation.

Non-profit Org
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit No. 1075

Archdiocese of Pittsburgh of Western Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 1769
Cranberry Township, PA 16066-1769

