

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church
Celebrating 125 years witnessing to the Apostolic Faith

110 EAST MAIN STREET,
Marblehead, OH 43440

Rev. Fr. Peter Tomas, Rector

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***Holy Assumption Orthodox Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America,
Diocese of the Midwest***

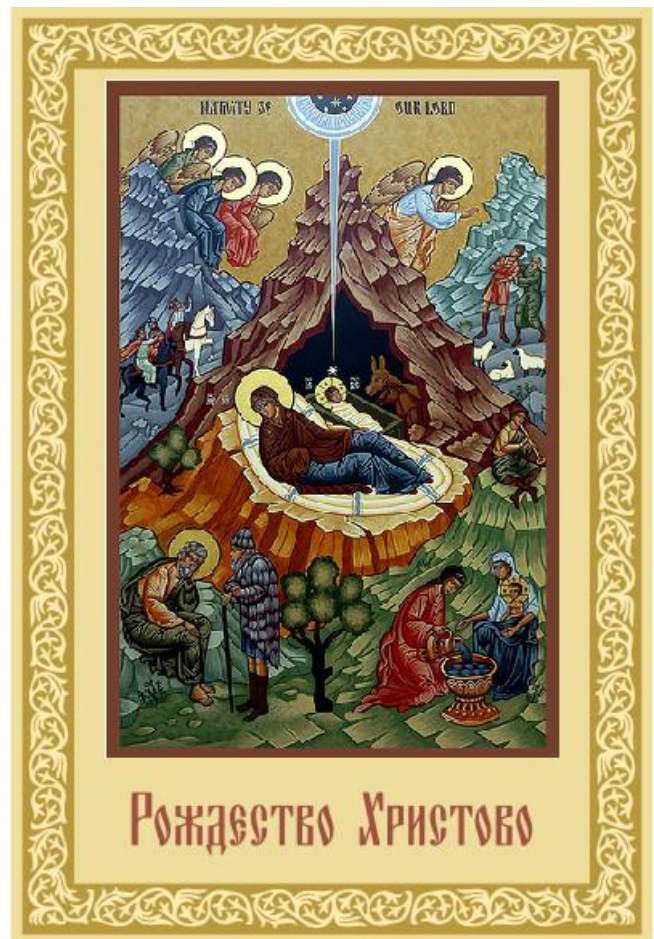
DECEMBER 24, 2023

**TWENTY NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY**

***Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
were taught by a star to adore You,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to You!***

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

Brethren: By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and



Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

and made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and

gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to fight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

GOSPEL: Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So, all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” So, all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us.’” Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel

of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.



Liturgical Schedule



MON. Dec 25

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

**9:40 AM
10:00 AM**

**HOURS
DIVINE LITURGY**

TUE. Dec 26

Second Day of the Nativity of our Lord; Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God

WED. Dec 27

Third Day of the Nativity of our Lord; Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen

THU. Dec 28

Afterfeast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia

FRI. Dec 29

Afterfeast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; 14,000 Infants (the Holy Innocents) slain by Herod at Bethlehem

SAT. Dec 30

Afterfeast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; Saturday before Theophany; Virgin Martyr Anyisia at Thessalonica

4:00 PM

VESPERS

SUN. Dec 31

30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Sunday after the Nativity of Christ
Leave-taking of the Nativity of Christ

**9:10 AM
9:30 AM**

**HOURS
DIVINE LITURGY** Followed by Coffee Hour

MON. Jan 1

Circumcision of Our Lord; St. Basil the Great
New Year 2024

**9:40 AM
10:00 AM**

**HOURS
DIVINE LITURGY**



FOR YOUR PRAYERS



Tony Monastra, 2119 Willow Cove Marblehead, OH 43440; Patti Owens, 311 Woodbridge Road, Vermilion, OH 44089; Basil Glovinsky, 1007 Glendale Drive, Port Clinton, OH 43452; Subdeacon Roger Pinta, P.O. Box 39, Middle Bass, OH 43446; Diane Tryon, 109 Joslyn Street, Arcadia, OH 44804; Ed & Irene Vangeloff, 454 Strouse Lane, Sandusky, OH 44870

DECEMBER CANDLE SPONSORS



Altar Candles: Fr. Peter & Mat. Michelle, For Health and God's Blessings of Barbara Wroblewski, Matushka's mother and Michal Tomáš, Father's father (**\$50**); **Chandelier:** Jean Hileman – For safe travel home for the Issler family (**\$50**); **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** Jean Hileman - In loving memory of my father, William Pipenur (**\$25**); **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, Birthday blessings to Ben (**\$20**); **Candles at St. Sophia Icon:** For Safety and Health of Nicholas, Tikhon, Gleice, & Chloe (**\$20**)



DECEMBER REPOSED

1- Helen Elchisco (1990); **3-** Mary Hubicki (2013); **8-** Mary (Marika) Lefas (2019); **12-** Anna Bretz (2002); **13-** Joseph Mazurik (1986); **13-** Archimandrite Seraphim Oblivantseff (1954) Former Pastor; **15-** Michael W. Belenky (1971); **20-** Julia Brosojah Millie (1953); **20-** John Mazurik (2017); **20-** William Pipenur (2003); **21-** Mary Sennich (1985); **22-** Antonima Vecsey (1972); **23-** Steven Danchisen (1982); **24-** Alexandra Turkul (1980); **24-** John Bird No year Provided; **29-** Alexandra Dotsenko (1980); **30-** Rita Felenchak (1996); **31-** Jevgeny Cernonok (1980); **31-** Janice Timko (2021)



VIGILS FOR DECEMBER 17

- **1** Peace for Palestine

Susan Guzy 1 In loving memory of Aunt Mary, Vichnaya Pamyat'

Laura Kovach 3 For health and/or healing of James W., Beverly S., Patti O., Tony M., Matushka Michelle, Hannah S., Barbara D., Pauline O., George K., Joe H., Margi H., Betty K., Ben F., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Sharon D., John D., and Karen D.

Memory eternal to Mary Perry, Don Kiser, Tim Dayton, and Lloyd Dayton.

In Thanksgiving to God for prayers answered

Jean Hileman 1 Health of Tom Hileman

Sandy Martin 1 Special intentions

Darlene & Gabe Mazurik 1 Special intentions

Natalie Twarek 8 Anniversary blessings for Ed and Irene, For the health and recovery of Jim, For the health of Ruth, Health and healing for Father's dad Michal and Matushka's mom Barbara, For the health and recovery of Basil, Diane, Tony, Tom, and Rick, For the health of Bev, Roger, Ed, Irene, Father David, Marilyn, Pauline, Judy, Mimi, Tina, Ron, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Kurt, Leslie, Amber, Zach, Dottie, Jamie, Helen Lis and Tina's dad, Earl, Tom, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Betty, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Chuck, Bodhi, Stella, Jake, Pat, Karen, special intentions

PRAYER LIST

Parishioners & Family: Patti Owens / Tony Monastra / Barbara Wroblewski / Michal Tomáš / Ruth / Basil Glovinsky / Dale / Sophie / Jeanne Smith / Carol / David Martin / Fred Soski / Chris Hannon / Subdeacon Roger Pinta / Ed Vangeloff / Irene Vangeloff / Diane Tryon / Sonja Rose / Ron Royhab / James Bargdill / John Beadle / Carole Conaway / Gary Conaway / Sharon Dietrich / Michael Glovinsky / Shirley Gresh / Joseph Habegger / Elaine Hileman / Betty Kovach / Helen Lis / Child Stella Miller / William Pipenur / Earl Rindfleisch / Helen Jean Rofkar / George Royhab / Marianne Royhab / Stephanie Royhab / Kathy Jacob / the child Bodhi Cassell / Gleice, her unborn baby & Chloe / Gabrielle and her newborn Josey / Carol / Debbie & Marco / Nora. **Other Requests:** Charles Schlett / Kathy Debevits / Maxwell Chaney / Sidharth Bijilani – friend of Subdeacon Roger and Debbie Pinta / Anthony / Archpriest David Lis / Bishop Matthias / Archpriest Emilian & Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan / Kurt Franck / Ben Franklin / Donald Gresh / Mark Ludvik / Mark Masica / Robert Piznar / Valerie Ritzenthaler / William / Rick Rowe / Chuck Wiedenhoft / Chris. **Military:** Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military



ATTENDANCE

12/16 Vespers, 9 attending; 12/17 Divine Liturgy, 23 attending (2 Guests);



READERS LIST

Sunday Dec 24 – Tim
Monday Dec 25 – Subdeacon Roger
Sunday Dec 31 – Ron
Sunday Jan 7 – Natalie



SUNDAY OFFERING

Sunday, December 17, 2023

Tithe	\$1,135.00
Candles	\$ 12.00
Vigils	\$ 65.00
Donations	\$ 60.00
Holy Day Donation	\$1,620.00
Liturgical Item Donation	\$ 20.00
Total:	\$2,912.00

May the Lord reward you for your financial and spiritual support!



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

23 – Teri Cassell *; **25** – Darlene Mazurik *; **31** – Fred & Christi Soski Anniversary *



CHARITY OF THE MONTH

“**Bistro 163**” is the charity we donate to for the month of December.



OTTAWA COUNTY HOLIDAY BUREAU

Thank you from the Ottawa County Holiday Bureau - Danbury Unit. With your support, those in need in our community were supported with vouchers to help purchase food and other household supplies. To help with these expenses please send financial support with check made out to Danbury Holiday Bureau and mailed to 4941 East Harbor Rd. – Port Clinton, OH 43452. Wishing you and your loved ones a Blessed Christmas Season and a safe and healthy New Year!



“SVJAT VECHUR” HOLY NIGHT SUPPER

Our Traditional “Svjat Vechur” Holy Night Supper will take place on **Friday, January 5th after Vespers**. We would like to invite you all for the supper and bring your family and friends along to share in the joy of the Nativity Season. To make sure that we have a seat for everyone attending, we kindly ask that you give us the count of the people attending. The sign-up sheet is located in the vestibule of the church. We also ask that you prepare your traditional Christmas Eve dishes to share with everyone.



CLEANING SCHEDULE

Dec 26, Natalie
Jan 2, Basil & Tim
Jan 8, Susan
Jan 15, Jean



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA PLANTS DONATIONS 2023

The following is the list of sponsors who made donations in Memory/Good Health of their loved ones

Dennis Bird 5 –	In loving memory of Marguerite
Basil Glovinsky 3 –	For the health of Glovinsky and Monak families In loving memory of departed members of the Glovinsky and Monak families
Jean Hileman 2 –	For the health of Elaine Hileman. In loving memory of William and Helen Pipenur and Robert Hileman and James Hileman
Laura Kovach 2 –	In memory of departed members of the Mazur, Polansky and Kovach families. For the health of all our family and friends of Family & Friends
Sandy Martin 2 –	For the health of family and friends In loving memory of family and friends
Greg Mazur 1 –	In loving memory of Mom and Dad and Dominic and all Mazur, Polansky and Danchisen family
Athanasios Paullas 4 –	In loving memory of Mary Lorraine Paullas For the health of Teila Spencer, Randy Gilliam, Betty Gilliam, George Paullas, Athanasios Maragos, Nektarios Paullas, Anna Maria Paullas, Alexandra Paullas, Stephania Paullas, Chrysavge Lazaridon
Sonya Rose 5 –	For the health of Joe M. Rose, Margaret, Chris, R.J., Denny, Sandy, David, Dan, Jane, and Lisa In loving memory of Joe, Mom & Dad, GeorgeMichael, Marguerite, Michael & Helen, George & Helen, Margaret, John, Jack & Helen
Stamp family 2 –	For the health of Larisa, Arcadie, Lefterii, Natalia, Sebastian and Ryan
Natalie Twarek 3 –	In loving memory of departed members of the Mazurik, Twarek, Busony and Brooks families. For the health of our parish family. Nativity blessing to our family and friends
Fr. Peter and Mat. Michelle 4 –	For the health of Barbara Wroblewski. For the health of Michal & Helena Tomas. In loving memory of all deceased of the Tomas & Drozd families In loving memory of all deceased of the Wroblewski & Dubee families



We would like to thank the following parishioners for their donations for wine and incense

Angela Bricker –	incense
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Basil Glovinsky –	incense	
Greg Mazur –	incense	In loving memory of Archpriest George Gladky
Athanasios Paullas –	incense	
Ron & Roberta Royhab –	wine	For the health of the Royhab and Libb families
Fr. Peter & Mat. Michelle –	incense	

May Our Lord and God reward you all for your generosity and grant you His Special blessing throughout this Nativity Season!



Merry Christmas

*Wishing you all a Happy and Blessed Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord!
Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!*

With love, Fr. Peter and Matushka Michelle



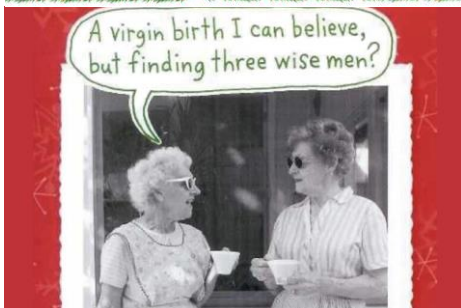
NEW “2024” LITURGICAL CALENDARS

We wish to express our sincere thanks to **Tom Priesman** of **Neidecker, Crosser & Priesman Funeral Home** for sponsoring our liturgical calendars. The new calendars are located in the vestibule of the church.

UP-COMING EVENTS IN OUR PARISH – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



- Dec. 25th** NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (*Monday*)
- Dec. 31st** New Year’s Eve (*Sunday*)
- Jan. 1st** New Year 2024; Circumcision of Our Lord; St. Basil the Great (*Monday*)
- Jan. 5th** Eve of Theophany – “Svjat Vechur” Holy Night Supper (*Friday*)
- Jan. 6th** THEOPHANY (BAPTISM) OF OUR LORD (*Saturday*)
- Consider sponsoring a Sunday coffee hour following the Divine Liturgy



Who Were the Wise Men? by Reader John Malov

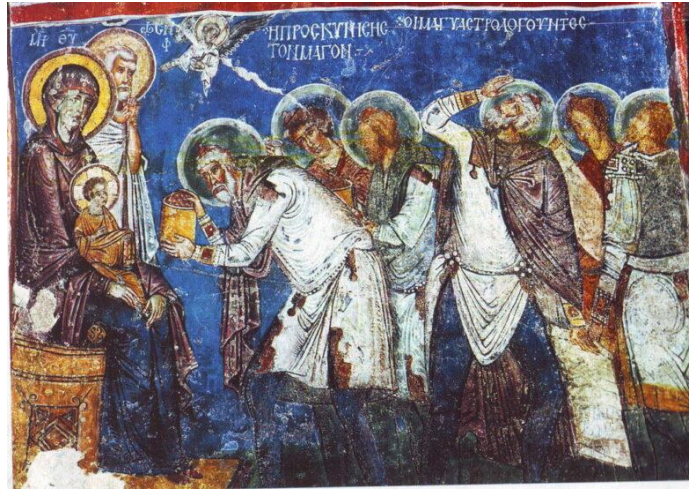
Despite the story of the Wise Men bringing their gifts to the Infant Christ being very popular, the bible contains but very limited information about them. Everything that we know about these people originated in early Christian literature and developed into its current form in the Middle Ages.

The Bible does not even mention their number. The widespread assumption of there being three wise men (attributed to Origen) is based on the number of their gifts to the Savior. There are however many traditions indicating much larger numbers. For example, Armenians and Syrians believe that there were 12 wise men, arriving in Jerusalem with a large retinue.

In the Gospel, the wise men are denoted with the Greek word “μάγοι”, usually translated in the Latin tradition as “magi” (magicians). In ancient literature, there are two meanings of this term, Zoroastrian priests of Persian origin and Babylonian astrologers forming a separate occupational group. The tradition of the Persian origin of the Magi is mainly contained in Byzantine iconography. European art either makes no mention of their ethnicity, or completely correlates it with the Arab or Byzantine East. Saint Gregory the Theologian considered the Magi to be Chaldean astrologers.

According to St Matthew, the wise men lived somewhere in the east. The fact that they were following the Star of Bethlehem for about five months, makes the Bible scholars believe that they may have lived in Babylon, Mesopotamia, or India.

The possibility of the emergence of an unusually bright star, leading the Magi to Jesus, is not only not entertained but also explained by researchers. For example, astronomer Johannes Kepler writes about the periodically appearing conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces, synchronously approaching Mars, and ultimately giving a bright celestial phenomenon.



Since the time of early Christianity, there have been various versions of the time when the Magi visited the infant Christ. According to the ancient Eastern legend, the adoration of the Magi took place after the meeting of Jesus Christ with Simeon the God-receiver and before the flight of the holy family to Egypt.

However, there are many other dates for this event. Justin Martyr writes that “Immediately after His birth, the wise men from Arabia came to worship Him, having come first to Herod, who then reigned in your land” (Dialogue with Trypho, 77). According to St John Chrysostom, the star appeared to the Magi before the birth of Christ. “The Magi did not come to the Mother during childbirth, nor did they know the time when She gave birth. They had no reason therefore to make any conclusions about the future based on the course of the stars. On the contrary, seeing a star that appeared in their land long before Christ’s birth, they went to look at the One who was born” (St John Chrysostom. Interpretation of St Matthew the Evangelist, 63). Other ancient authors, such as Eusebius Pamphili (Ecclesiastical History, Book 1, Chapter 8), believe that the worship of the Magi took place approximately in the second year after Christ’s birth.

Because the names of the Magi were not mentioned in the Bible, it is impossible to tell exactly what they were. According to the most popular version, originating from the ecclesiastical and apocryphal traditions of the medieval West, they were named Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. In particular, these are the names on the Ravenna mosaic in Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo. They appear for the first time in the writings of the Benedictine monk Bede the Venerable (about the 6th century).

Early Christian literature offers several other versions, according to which the wise men’s names were Abimelech, Ahuzzath and Phichol (Origen); Hormizd, Yazgerd and Peroz (the Syrian tradition) etc. The Greek and Jewish traditions also have their own versions.

According to a theory by the Bishop Caesarius of Arles, the Magi were kings from the East. The idea of the Magi being kings became established in medieval Europe after the 9th century. Traditionally, it is

believed that Melchior was the king of Arabia, Gaspar was the king of Tarsus and Balthasar was the king of Ethiopia.



Shrine with relics of the three wise men

With the development of the iconographic image of the Magi, they began to be depicted as representatives of three different age groups (Gaspar as a young man, Balthasar as a middle-aged man and Melchior as an elder). In the Age of Discovery, the Magi became symbols of three parts of the world (Europe, Africa, America) and three human races – white, black and Asian. This interpretation appears only in Modern History, whereas the Magi have always figuratively represented pagan world.

According to legend, the wise men were baptized by the Apostle Thomas and joined him in preaching the gospel. After years of righteous life, they accepted martyrdom in eastern countries. Their relics were found by Empress Helena, who brought them to Constantinople. In the 5th

century, the relics of the Magi were transferred to Mediolanum (Milan), and in 1164, at the request of Frederick Barbarossa, to Cologne, where they are kept in a gilded three-part reliquary in the Cologne Cathedral.

“LOVE GOING TO GOD'S CHURCH”

What do you find in the world, and what in church? In the world, at every step there is vanity, delusion, and vice; in the church is truth, sanctity, and every kind of virtue. In the world is corruption, sin, and death; in the church is the incorruption of the saints and eternal life...

Thus, do you see what a difference there is between the temple — the house of God, and the world? Do you see how beneficial and necessary it is for a Christian to visit the temple of God in order to educate himself for the Heavenly Fatherland, in order to bring the spirit of Christ into himself, to engender heavenly, saintly manners? For, where else besides God's temple will you hear the word of God; where, beside in church, will you receive the mysteries of faith; where will you obtain the strength to live in a Christian way? All of this is in church and from church.

St. John of Kronstadt

Please Note: All the days between December 25th and January 4th are fast free



OUR SYMPATHIES – MEMORY ETERNAL!

Our prayers and deepest sympathies are extended to the family and friends of

† **MARGARETTA “MARGE” DZIAMA (105)**, who fell asleep in the Lord on

Wednesday, December 20th. Her father was Very Reverend Fr. Basil Dziama, a Mitered Archpriest (our former rector 1941-1952), and her mother was Matushka Anna Lasichak Dziama.

She will be laid to rest on **Thursday, December 28th** from Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Lorain. “**In blessed repose grant eternal rest, O Lord, to your ever-remembered servant †**

MARGARETTA and make her Memory Eternal! Vichnaya Jej Pamyat!’”



NATIVITY MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE METROPOLITAN TIKHON 2023

December 25, 2023
Protocol 12/004

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, my beloved children in the Lord,

Christ is born! Glorify him!

At the Vigil for today's feast, we sang with the words of St. Germanus of Constantinople: "Today the Virgin gives birth to the Maker of all. Eden offers a cave and a star discloses Christ, the Sun, to those in darkness" (second sticheron at the aposticha).



In a supreme paradox, the created world today offers shelter to the one who contains all things in the palm of his hand. Coming among us in obscurity, "born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal. 4:4), in the form of a tiny baby, "in the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7), hidden in a dark cave, nevertheless he shines his light upon our gloom.

Becoming small, he allows us to touch his greatness. Clothing himself in our weakness, he permits us to rest in his strength. Embracing obscurity, he brings enlightenment to the ends of the earth. Ministering as a servant, he shows his love as our Master, our Lord, and our King.

In our present day, as the gloom waxes and the darkness closes, as "wars and rumors of wars" abound (Mt. 24:6), the icon of the Nativity—Eternity laid as a baby in a crib, Salvation in the form of a newborn child, Redemption in the weakness of infant flesh—is as timely as ever. As an American hymn writer wrote over a century and a half ago, in the dark streets of Bethlehem, "the hopes and fears of all the years" are met together on the night of the Savior's birth. If we seek an answer, a solution, to the questions of our age and every age, that Answer, the very Word of the Father, can be found lying in a manger, sleeping, yet with his heart awake (Songs 5:2); resting in his tiny human body, but at work as God (Jn. 5:17).

Once the wise men journeyed, not to meet Herod in his court of splendor, nor to seek Caesar on his Roman throne, but to find a Child in his Mother's arms. Likewise, we do not seek peace, salvation, and joy from the hand and works of "princes and sons of men" (Ps. 145:3), but from the Lord who appears to us in silence, showing us the way of humility, stillness, forgiveness, meekness, and mercy.

Today, as we join the righteous Joseph, the magi, and the shepherds in worshipping the Lord at his Nativity, enthroned in the lap of his Mother, we place our trust in his care, his providence, his justice, which transcend all human comprehension. Setting aside our own righteousness, we repent and embrace the peace and silence of the manger. Setting aside the grand and distracting worries of the world, we concern ourselves with generosity and forbearance towards our brethren and neighbors.

As St. Porphyrius of Kavso-kalyvia writes, "Only prayer, silence, and love are effective." Resting in prayer and silence, through faith and trust we encounter the love of the one who became flesh for our sake, in whom every conflict and battle ceases, the Peace and Power of God, come to reign in our hearts through his Incarnation. May we always accept that love with repentance, humility, and gratitude, and joyfully share it with others, this day and every day.

To Christ our God and Savior, born this Christmas day, be all glory, together with his Father who is without beginning and his All-holy Spirit, unto the endless ages of ages. Amen.

Christ is born! Glorify him! I

remain as ever,

Sincerely yours in the joy of our newborn Lord and God and Savior,



+TIKHON

Archbishop of Washington Metropolitan of All America and Canada



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Sunday, 25 December 2023
The Nativity according to the Flesh of Our Lord, God, and Savior
JESUS CHRIST
No. 161

**ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE OF THE MOST REVEREND
DANIEL
ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST,
ON THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST**

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Venerable Monastics, and Beloved Faithful,

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2).

As we gather in the spirit of joy to celebrate the Nativity of Christ, these words of the holy Prophet Isaiah resound once again in our ears and in our hearts. Year after year, this ancient yet ever-new prophecy takes on renewed significance as we contemplate the mystery of Our Savior's birth. In the Gospel of Saint Luke, we

recall how the watchful shepherds, tending to their flocks in the dark of night in the hills of Bethlehem, suddenly experienced “the glory of the Lord shining on them” (*Luke 2:9*). The prevailing darkness of this world was pierced by a heavenly brightness: Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, who even now continues to enlighten the darkness of our earthly existence.

How do we today come to experience this Light, which dispels darkness and destroys it? We encounter it primarily as Divine Love: that Love which has altered the course of history, freed us from evil, filled our hearts with peace and joy, and brought life to the world. In the darkness of our night, the Love of God has been revealed to us: it is Jesus, the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. He is “God’s love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 5:5*).

Yes, “the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all people” (*Titus 2:11*): in our jubilant celebration of the fiord’s birth, we take to heart that Christ our fiord irrupted into human lives and affairs as we went about our usual business, and radically changed all things. The grace of God, this unmerited and transformative gift, continues to be given to us in the Person of Jesus Christ, our fiord and Savior. The Feast of the Nativity poignantly reminds us that God’s love is unceasing, and that it outlasts the most harrowing circumstances and the worst instances of human sin. It is this love for mankind that we find encapsulated in the well-known words of the Gospel of St John: “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (*John 3:16*).

The love of God, revealed in his Son by the Holy Spirit, is neither conditional nor temporary, and does not depend on us or our “worthiness.” Even when we fall into sin, God continues to love us—but how often do we wrongly perceive God’s goodness as a response to our virtue, or divine punishment in our misfortunes! Yet despite our weakness and sinfulness, God’s love remains steadfast: it does not change nor is it fickle; it is faithful and ever patient. This is this incomparable gift that we encounter as we celebrate the Nativity of Christ. Each year, we remember and celebrate that the fiord has revealed himself to us as absolute, tender, and unfailing Love. His glory does not overwhelm us; rather, he is born in complete and utter poverty to bring all of his creation into the abundant wealth of his love.

Beloved Flock, “the grace of God has appeared” to shine forth in your life, in your hearts, and in the world we inhabit. Receive this grace as the unmerited gift of God’s love, and the light of Christ, born on this sacred night, will shine forth in you and through you, piercing the darkness that envelops this world.

Be assured of my fervent prayers and best wishes for you and all your loved ones during this holy season. May your celebration of the fiord’s birth may be adorned with radiance and joy, and may the coming New Year be enriched with abundant blessings, through the unceasing prayers and intercessions of our Most Holy and Most Pure Lady, the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.

With love in the Newborn Savior,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Daniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest