

THANK YOU LETTER FROM BISTRO 163

Thank you so much for your generous donation of \$300 to Bistro 163. We value your financial support of our mission, “to feed our community, one plate at a time.” This contribution will offset the cost of as many as 60 complimentary meals, or more!

Bistro 163 is an ecumenical food ministry that seeks to benefit the entire Ottawa County community, both those in need of help, and those with help to give. It is our mission to build community by providing a place where all neighbors eat and come together as ONE. Bistro 163 has been voted the Best of the Best” #1 Non-Profit in our community for three consecutive years.

We are truly grateful for your support, your patronage, and your friendship!

THE ANCESTORS OF CHRIST

On the Sunday before Christmas the Church commemorates the human ancestors of Jesus, all those from Adam to Joseph who are part of the genealogy of Jesus according to the Gospels. By drawing attention to Jesus’ genealogy, the liturgical tradition creates in us a feeling of expectation for Christ’s birth—the fulfillment of humanity’s hopes. Also, “the Church’s idea, this Sunday, seems to be to bring the righteous who lived before Christ into the joy of the Nativity ‘inviting them all by praises and divine songs to prepare for the birth of Christ’”(The Year of Grace of the Lord, p.57).



God has a plan for all creation and especially for the salvation of humanity through Christ. God prepares and acts in history according to divine purposes—without violating our free will and always responding to the results of human actions according to His eternal foreknowledge.

The human ancestry of Jesus shows that the Lord completely identifies with the human race, with men and women of flesh and blood, failings and all. He becomes part of us. That’s what Christmas is all about. St. John Chrysostom says that Christ was not embarrassed by the “skeletons” hidden in His ancestor’s closets.

The conclusion of the genealogy is the beginning of a new generation—the age of the Messiah—and you are part of it as a Christian. The age of preparation and promise is over and a new age of fullness and completion is now going on.

Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen Commemorated on [December 27](#)

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called “archdeacon.” He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty. In the words of Asterias, he was “the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel.”

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint Stephen preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned Saint Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. Saint Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, Saint Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death Saint Stephen said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Protomartyr Stephen, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stephen on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

Saint Stephen is also commemorated on August 2 (Translation of his relics) and on September 15 (Uncovering of his relics in the year 415).

Galatians 4:4-7 (*Epistle, Nativity*)

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

“Why Can’t Church Be More Fun” topic of December 30 live stream meeting with Bishop Paul

“Why Can’t Church Be More Fun” will be the topic of an interactive live stream video meeting with His Grace, Bishop Paul of Chicago and the Midwest at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 30, 2018.

Originally scheduled to air on November 18 but postponed due to a scheduling conflict, the live stream will be hosted by the [Midwest Diocese Centre for Family Life](#). It offers an exciting opportunity for parents, grandparents, godparents, teachers and others to pose their questions “live” to Bishop Paul. [Videos of previous live streamed meetings](#), in which Bishop Paul address such topics as “Teen Realities: Relationships,” “Who Teaches Our Children” and “Orthodox Living For Busy Families,” are available for viewing online.

To register for the event, [subscribe to the Midwest Family website online](#). An email with connection information will be sent prior to the event.

The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Commemorated on [December 25](#)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city’s inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

“I behold a strange and most glorious mystery,” the Church sings with awe, “Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid.” (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin “wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger” (Luke 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three shepherds watching their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord (Saint Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magi by a wondrous star. Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Theophylactus, commenting on Saint Matthew’s Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was “a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star.” Saint Demetrius of Rostov says it was a “manifestation of divine energy” (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi “fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Mt. 2:11).

The present Feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, “Brethren, observe the feastdays; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month.” In another place it also says, “Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world.”

In the second century Saint Clement of Alexandria also indicates that the day of the Nativity of Christ is December 25. In the third century Saint Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of Saint Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia (December 28) were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church. There is evidence of this in the works of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose of Milan, Saint John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church of the fourth century. Saint John Chrysostom, in a sermon which he gave in the year 385, points out that the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is ancient, and indeed very ancient. In this same century, at the cave in Bethlehem made famous by the Birth **Con’t Pg 12**

CHRIST THE SAVIOR

During the early Christian centuries Christmas and Theophany or Epiphany were celebrated together. The liturgical tradition concentrated on Theophany which marks the baptism of Jesus and the beginning of His adult ministry as the initial great event revealing Jesus' significance to humanity. During the early fourth century of the Church of Alexandria observed both Christmas and Theophany on January 6th. In due time Christmas began to be celebrated separately— first in Rome (354), then Cappadocia (380), Antioch (386), Constantinople (400) and gradually everywhere—on December 25th. By choosing this date the Church wished to christianize the “Feast of the Invincible Sun,” a popular observance marking the shift in the sun’s cycles in late December when the days again become longer. For the Church Fathers Christ was the only invincible Sun of Righteousness Who by His birth illuminated the world and inaugurated the dawn of a new age.

In the liturgical year it is still natural to observe the period from Christmas to Theophany as a continuous celebration of Christ’s coming to the world. On Christmas we celebrate the incarnation of Christ while on Theophany we remember His public appearance as the Son of God. To think of the period between these two holidays as having the same significance, that is, Christ’s coming to the world, may help us to appreciate more deeply the meaning of Christ’s coming to our own lives.

What is the meaning of Christmas? The heart of Christmas is Christ Himself. Only Christ can give us a true Christmas.

In Hebrew the name of Jesus is Yeshua, that is, “God saves,” or “God is salvation.” Christ is the Saviour.

Christ is not simply a religious genius, an inspired prophet, or a wise teacher but the Lord of life and death. He is the victor over sin, satan, corruption and death. He comes to us as God, a divine gift from outside the realm of human possibilities, in order to rescue us from a condition of alienation, evil and mortality which no education, no moralisms, no technical skills, but only God’s power, can overcome. He is Emmanuel, the presence of God Himself in our midst, Christ the Savior! (A year of the Lord Liturgical Bible Studies, Vol. 2)

Pledge Cards

Please turn in your
pledge cards next
Sunday, December 30th

Thank you!



A FEAST OF JOY

Christmas is preeminently a feast of joy. In the radiant faces of children and the Expectant sparkle of their eyes, in the exchange of gifts and greetings, in the sounds of Christmas music, we catch a glimpse of humanity’s deepest longings for joy, peace, sharing, unity, love and celebration.

Christmas is an invitation to us to seek the fulfillment of our desires through Christ Who became man, lived among us and embraced us with His love. The message of Christmas, is full of hope: Christ is Emmanuel, God with us! Rejoice! Heaven and earth are united! We do not have to search for a Savior high on a mountain or in a deep sea. Christ has fully united Himself with our human nature. In the words of St John the Evangelist: “The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw His glory!...Out of the fullness of His grace He has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another.” (Jn. 1:14,16)

Christmas is not merely a promise but already a fulfillment because Christ, God’s priceless gift to us, is already given! We have the assurance that Christ lives and embraces us with His love here and now. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS TO RECEIVE HIS GIFT BY FAITH, AN OPEN HEART AND OBEDIENCE UNDER THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST. Without accepting the call of Christ, without receiving the loving forgiveness of the One Who was crucified for us, Christmas remains an unfulfilled dream. Only as the Risen Christ is born in our hearts, as we die to our old ways and become new by His grace, can we truly experience the magnitude of the meaning of Christmas, the joyful festival of God’s personal presence in our midst.



DECEMBER

	Cleaners	Readers	Social
2	Laura	Wayne	NO SOCIAL
9	Joe & Sonya	Wayne	Stephanie K
16	Sandy	Tim	Rachel A
23	Wayne	Natalie	Jean H
30	Matthew A.	Ron	OPEN

Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God

Commemorated on [December 26](#)

The Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos: On the second day of the feast, the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos is celebrated. Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity—concretely and historically—is the humanity He received from Mary. His body is, first of all, her body. His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.

Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding us that the source and foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."



SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS PRAYER

With uprightness of mind let us lift up our voices in prayer, celebrating the coming of Christ into the world. For He who is equal in honor with the Father and the Spirit has from love clothed Himself with our humanity and makes ready to be born in a manger. The time of our salvation is at hand! Be glad and rejoice, O Bethlehem, land of Judah! Dance, O mountains and hills round about Judea! Christ comes to save those whom He has fashioned. Lord, glory to You! (Forefeast of the Birth of Christ!)

PREPARATION FOR THE BLESSING OF HOMES

Before the Priest arrives at your home, here are a few reminders on how to prepare:

- In the main room of the home, usually the kitchen or dining room, have placed on the table a white cloth, a candle and /or an Icon or cross. You may place a small container of Holy Water on the table. (Note: Father will be bringing his own.)
- Make a list of those living in the house including pets and all deceased you want prayed for.
- Turn off all TV's, radios, computers, etc. So as to keep focused on the blessing service.
- Make sure that pets are heeled or restrained so as not to get underfoot while Father goes through the home.
- In some customs, someone (usually a child) takes a candle and leads Father through the house while the rest follow.
- If you have any items to be blessed (Icon, Cross, etc.). Put them on the table where the blessing will take place.
- When the priest arrives, have everyone in the home gather around the table and join in the blessing. PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT.
- Invite friends or neighbors to participate and witness the beauty of this tradition.

NOTE: Remember, the invitation to the priest to come and bless your home is an invitation to ask for the mercy of God upon the household. The sprinkling of the Holy Water is a sign of God's presence in the home as an extension of His Holy House, the Church. It is a time to renew our commitment to God as we begin another year in His mercy and love for mankind.

The Nativity Sermon of St. John Chrysostom

Behold a new and wondrous mystery.



My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Since this heavenly birth cannot be described, neither does His coming amongst us in these days permit of too curious scrutiny. Though I know that a Virgin this day gave birth, and I believe that God was begotten before all time, yet the manner of this generation I have learned to venerate in silence and I accept that this is not to be probed too curiously with wordy speech.

For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him who works.

What shall I say to you; what shall I tell you? I behold a Mother who has brought forth; I see a Child come to this light by birth. The manner of His conception I cannot comprehend.

Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt.

Christ, finding the holy body and soul of the Virgin, builds for Himself a living temple, and as He had willed, formed there a

man from the Virgin; and, putting Him on, this day came forth; unashamed of the lowliness of our nature.

For it was to Him no lowering to put on what He Himself had made. Let that handiwork be forever glorified, which became the cloak of its own Creator. For as in the first creation of flesh, man could not be made before the clay had come into His hand, so neither could this corruptible body be glorified, until it had first become the garment of its Maker.

What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of days has become an infant. He Who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, Who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infants bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.

For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infants food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.

Nativity of our Lord Con't

of Jesus Christ, the empress Saint Helen built a church, which her mighty son Constantine adorned after her death. In the Codex of the emperor Theodosius from 438, and of the emperor Justinian in 535, the universal celebration of the day of the Nativity of Christ was decreed by law. Thus, Nicephorus Callistus, a writer of the fourteenth century, says in his History that in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian established the celebration of the Nativity of Christ throughout all the world.

Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople in the fifth century, Sophronius and Andrew of Jerusalem in the seventh, Saints John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maium and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople in the eighth, the Nun Cassiane in the ninth, and others whose names are unknown, wrote many sacred hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which are still sung by the Church on this radiant festival.

During the first three centuries, in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Cyprus, the Nativity of Christ was combined together with the Feast of His Baptism on January 6, and called "Theophany" ("Manifestation of God"). This was because of a belief that Christ was baptized on anniversary of His birth, which may be inferred from Saint John Chrysostom's sermon on the Nativity of Christ: "it is not the day on which Christ was born which is called Theophany, but rather that day on which He was baptized."

In support of such a view, it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23) when He was baptized. The joint celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Theophany continued to the end of the fourth century in certain Eastern Churches, and until the fifth or sixth century in others.

The present order of services preserves the memory of the ancient joint celebration of the Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany. On the eve of both Feasts, there is a similar tradition that one should fast until the stars appear. The order of divine services on the eve of both feastdays and the feastdays themselves is the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world. The angel said to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts,

glorifying God and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Those who heard these things were astonished at what the shepherds told them concerning the Child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:10-20).

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is a cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind, "for the Savior is Born!"

Concurring with the witness of the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, in their God-inspired writings, describe the Feast of the Nativity of Christ as most profound, and joyous, serving as the basis and foundation for all the other Feasts.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



HAPPENING'S AT ST. ST JOE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sunday December 30 at 3:00pm - Come & celebrate the season "A Christmas Concert". St. Joe's Choir under the direction of Ronald Ossovicki.

There will be 125 – 150 cast and crew members of the Cleveland Performing Arts Ministries coming to St. Joseph, Marblehead in March. There will be 3 shows:

Friday, March 29 @ 7 pm

Saturday, March 30 @ 7 pm

Sunday, March 31 @ 1 pm

All take place in the church.

Come see the vivid musical passion play, "THE TETELESTAI" here in Marblehead.