

THE WONDERWORKER

The Official Newsletter of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities

Nativity 2018



The Nativity Epistle of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion

Beloved in the Lord Brother-Archpastors, Reverend Fathers, Dear Brothers and Sisters, God-loving Children of the Russian Church Abroad!



It is with a feeling of the greatest joy that I express my heartfelt greetings on the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the approaching feast day of the Baptism of the Lord!

As expressed in one of our church hymns celebrating this holy event, when God deemed it good to appear on Earth, the entire world hastened to bring Him gifts: "The Angels offer a hymn; the heavens, a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, adoration; the earth, a cave; the wilderness, a manger."

What will we offer as a gift to the Almighty God, Who is now born a helpless Infant? "My son, give Me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26), says the Lord. Our hearts, our love, is the only gift most worthy in the eyes of God. To offer God one's heart means to give Him all of ourselves: our mind in obeying the Gospel, our will and obedience to the commandments, submitting and actively striving for God, not as a servant, but as His offspring, for whom happiness and bliss is to live in Christ and with Him.

In this past year, the fullness of the Local Russian Orthodox Church prayerfully marked the 100th anniversary of the sorrowful events connected with the revolution and the beginning of the epoch of godless persecutions, but also the 100th anniversary of the reestablishment of the Patriarchate in Russia, when St. Tikhon the Confessor, Patriarch of Moscow & All Russia, ascended the Patriarchal throne, which was to be his personal Golgotha. In 2018, we intend to continue this prayerful commemoration, remembering the Holy Hieromartyrs Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev; Andronicus, Archbishop of Perm; the Right-Believing Royal Passionbearers, the Holy Nun-Martyrs Grand Duchess Elizabeth and Nun Barbara, who offered their hearts to Christ, the Church, and their people to the extent that no earthly power could tear them from God's love, no earthly circumstances: not "tribulation, or distress, or persecution" (Romans 8:35).

And so, as we celebrated the Nativity of Christ and participate in the prayerful commemoration of this year, let us seek out the renewal of our inner strength and edification, let us pay heed to both Holy Scripture and the history of our Fatherland, let us strive to learn of the lives of these holy people and contemplate their personalities in order to enrich ourselves spiritually and intellectually. Let us bring these labors as a gift to the Child Who offered Himself to the Cross, remembering that we must extract from ourselves our wicked and dark hearts, so that in exchange for this Sacrifice we receive the gift of peace in our hearts, bright and renewed, a gift earned by the Holy New-Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church.

As we bend our knee before the Christ-Child and joyously experience this world-saving event, I prayerfully ask on behalf of all of you God's mercies and blessings, Heavenly aid in your labors and good deeds, good health, joyful celebrations and a happy New Year!

With love in the Nascent Christ,

+HILARION

Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia



FROM THE VICAR'S DESK



What Gift Do We Bring?

*The Very Reverend Archpriest Mark Rowe,
Vicar General, ROCOR Western Rite Communities*

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying,
'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him'
(Matthew 2:1-2)*

Christmas is a favorite time of year for most people. It's the time of year where we focus on the birth of Christ, and also all the trappings of the season. As we busy ourselves addressing cards, baking cookies, shopping for and wrapping gifts, it is remarkably easy to get distracted from the real reason for the joy of the season. Sometime after the Nativity of Christ, the Kings, or Wise Men sought out Christ and brought gifts to the King. They came on a long journey to find the King and worship at his feet, and so it is with us. In order for us to even offer our meager gifts to Christ, we must first seek Him.

The Nativity season is a perfect time to reflect on our personal relationship with Christ. Unlike the Magi of old, our journey is not made up of so many miles, but rather a journey of the heart. Coming to not only recognize but enthrone Christ in our lives is not just a passive or one-time event. Much like the Wise Men, it is a long journey, perhaps even a lifetime of constant seeking.

*So what do we give the King of all?
What possible gift can we bring that is worthy?*

The only thing we have to offer is our free will- our hearts and minds. Everything else in our lives- our bodies, homes, families, everything- are gifts from God. Our free will is the only thing we truly possess. When we submit our wills to the will of God in our lives, it is coming to terms with the process of theosis. It is becoming humble as we witness the humble birth of the Lord. When we forsake the world, the flesh and the devil, that is how we truly have a chance at becoming Christ-like, and how we give ourselves totally to Christ.

It also happens to be the only gift He really wants.

When we live a holy Orthodox life, strengthened by the grace of the Holy Mysteries, and strengthened by fasting and prayer, we work on giving up sin and self and give back to Christ, who gave all for us. May we hearken back to the holy cave at Bethlehem, and prepare our hearts and minds- the gifts we offer that are not only sought after, but truly worthy of such a loving and merciful King. As the familiar season tagline goes, "Wise Men still seek Him..."

The wonder of Nativity lies in the humility of Our Savior's birth. He humbly asks us to receive Him. May we be evermore joyful! Christ is born! Glorify Him! May the humble cave awaken our own humility and love for our neighbor.

Yours in Christ,
-Archpriest Mark Rowe



Western Rite Radio

<http://wroradio.blogspot.com/>



Topical, Engaging & Informative

Western Rite Radio presents a fresh perspective on the Orthodox Christian Faith in an entertaining and personal format!



Rachel's Corner

The ROCOR Western Rite Communities Pro-Life Page

Metropolitan Tikhon to deliver opening prayer at 45th DC March for Life on Friday, January 19



WASHINGTON, DC [OCA]

January 22, 2018 marks the 45th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion in the United States. Among those gathering in the US Capital for the annual March for Life on Friday, January 19 will be Orthodox Christian hierarchs, clergy, seminarians and laity from across the country.

At the request of His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, Chair of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon will lead the Orthodox delegation at the March. Other hierarchs slated to participate include His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and His



Metropolitan Tikhon leads marchers at 2017 March for Life in Washington, DC.

Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York. Metropolitan Tikhon will offer the opening prayer at the pre-March program and will be joined on the stage by His Eminence, Timothy Cardinal Dolan of New York.

The theme of this year's March is "Love Saves Lives."

The March will begin at noon at Twelfth Street on the National Mall, between Madison and Jefferson Drives. Immediately following Metropolitan Tikhon's opening prayer, Orthodox Christian marchers will gather at the "Orthodox Christians for Life" banner, which will be prominently displayed to the left of the stage at Constitution Avenue and Twelfth Street NW.

Prior to the March, at 9:00 a.m., Metropolitan Tikhon will celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the Great Feast of Theophany [OS] at DC's Saint Nicholas Cathedral, to which all are invited.

General information on the March and the annual Rose Dinner—including details on making reservations—is available on the March for Life web site. The site also features a list of and information about nearly four dozen additional state and local marches in which Orthodox Christians unable to travel to DC are invited to participate.

For further information please write to march@oca.org. ~Reprinted from the *Orthodox Church in North America Website with permission*

BEARING THE ICON OF CHRIST

By Matushka Tamara Cook

More than 2000 years ago, well before our age of modern medicine, a young woman was visited by an Angel of the Lord. The angel spoke to this young woman and told her not to be afraid. He told her, "The Lord is with Thee." During that time, an unwed mother faced not only the scorn and shame of her community; she faced death in the potential of being stoned to death, being cast out of her community and abandoned to the elements with neither food nor protection. There were no Food Stamps. WIC did not exist. They did not have grocery stores filled with all kinds of food from around the world. Being stoned to death as opposed to starving and ravaged by the elements or animals seems almost merciful in comparison to what someone would face in being cast out of her community.

Most often, if I thought of Angels when I was growing up, I thought of the Archangel Gabriel telling the Theotokos to not fear the Glory of the Lord, but since my first pregnancy, I cannot help but think that when Angels bringing messages from God to us, it is not only the Angel himself that leads the person who beholds the

countenance of an angel to fear, but the tidings he brings. When God visited Lot in Sodom, the angels told him he would have to leave his home and never look back; when Hagar was comforted by the Angel, she and her child had been kicked out of their home after lying with Abraham at the instruction of Sarah. Angels instruct us in God's mercy. Not all of God's mercy is comfortable and easy. In fact, most often, our greatest blessings come from trusting God's mercy when the world is instructing us in the exact opposite direction.

While the Archangel Gabriel brought the Mother of God, "Tidings of great joy," he told her that she was going to bear God. He told her she was the receptacle to bring God into the world and shelter God as an infant. Mary was going to be responsible for taking care of God in the person of a tiny infant. Can you imagine a 12-14 year old girl being given the responsibility of a child today? Not merely any child, but God himself? And while the thought of being blessed with the gift of an infant might bring great joy, it also brings great fear. Being responsible for another life is overwhelming for anyone, especially when a person feels like she barely understands how to be responsible for her own life. Being responsible for the humanity of God would have been a whole new level of fear for me.

Yet, every pregnancy is a reflection of that pregnancy. If life is the gift of God breathing himself into Adam, isn't my child an icon of God? When Jesus told us, "He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'" (Matthew 25:45), he is telling us that each one of us is an icon of God.

Throughout scripture, when Angels bring messages from God, they ask us to place ourselves in total submission to God with absolute trust in God's will above our own. It requires fearlessness to be that faithful to trust God's will. Fearlessness can either come from an ignorance of the potential, or it can come from foolishness, or it can come from the truth of trusting God that His will, no matter how painful, will ultimately be better for the world than what we know and see or have experienced in our past.

C. S. Lewis once said, "We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be."

Abortion is the result of fear. Every time I hear a person condemn a woman who considered or has had an abortion, I want to ask them, "Have you ever been afraid? Have you ever doubted God? Have you ever faced a situation and wondered if God had abandoned you?" These are fears that women face and some of them have never experienced a stable home life to have the confidence that others will help them. Maybe the young woman fears change. Maybe she fears loss of social status. Maybe she fears no one will love her. Maybe she fears condemnation by her parents or her church or her boyfriend who is also afraid of the responsibility and changes that caring for another life brings. Maybe she fears a loss of the dreams and plans she made for her future. Maybe she fears that she is not capable of dealing with an illness. Maybe she fears the emotional pain of separation from a part of her.

Maybe she fears not being worthy or capable of caring for a child. Maybe her life experiences have taught her not to trust anyone. Maybe all she realizes is that it will be painful and she fears the unknown pain of childbirth. Maybe she is not even aware of her fear and thinks, "I don't want 'it'." 'It' being: the child, the changes, the vulnerability that comes from having to depend on others. There are infinite reasons a woman might choose abortion rather than adoption and to call her a murderer does not do anything to heal her and bring her to see her child as a human being from the moment of conception.

I once read that childbirth is the female equivalent of a man being on the battlefield in war and the comparison has truly stuck with me. For a woman, childbirth changes our body chemistry, it changes our bodies. Being a parent kills the person we were and creates more than the new person (or persons) we bear into the world, it also creates a new person in the nature of the mother bearing the child. We give something up of ourselves as God forms the child within us. In our 'on the job training' we are formed into something new by our experiences of wanting to be a good parent and do a good job raising our children to be who God intended them to be.

For some of us, that is a welcome change. For others, we unthinkingly welcome any change because we do not realize how much different our lives will be. Still others, who have experienced the pain of what God did not

intend family to be, broken by the world, fear the changes due to the horrors of past experiences. Being told, “It is only a few cells” is a convenient story we accept without examining it too deeply. If we look too closely, we might see the icon of Christ in our child.

We are afraid of the pain of childbirth. We are afraid we cannot take care of ourselves, so how can we possibly take care of another life? We are afraid to ask for help and we are afraid of the shame of condemnation for not being the person others want us to be. We fear exposing our imperfections and being humiliated for our sins.

But God is love and perfect love casts out fear. Perfect love requires submission, which is absolute trust that God’s plan is better than our own plans. Perfect submission requires us to stop resisting God and allow him to make the changes in us so we can become who He created us to be. We become who he intends us to be by obedience to His will instead of obeying our fear.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7, OSB)

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. (1 John 4:18-21, OSB)

It is a fearful thing to hate whom God hath loved. To look upon another – his weaknesses, his sins, his faults, his defects – is to look upon one who is suffering. He is suffering from negative passions, from the same sinful human corruption from which you yourself suffer. This is very important, do not look upon him with judgmental eyes of comparison, noting the sins you assume you’d never commit. Rather, see him as a fellow sufferer, a fellow human being who is in need of the very healing of which you are in need. Help him, love him, pray for him – do unto him as you would have him do unto you.+ St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

Regardless of the age of a new mother, regardless of her ability to provide for a child, every new mother needs help. To treat a new mother with disdain and refuse to help her because, “she got herself into this situation” ignores that it takes two people to create a child and ALL new parents need assistance.

The Church is called to heal the sinner. If fear is the beginning of wisdom, then the next step to wisdom is to be open to God’s will for us beyond our feelings of fear or anger. We cannot control how we feel about a situation we face, but we can control how we respond to the situation. Do we compound the situation by trying to hide from our sins and hide them from one another? We can try to hide it from one another, but we cannot hide our sins from God or from ourselves. It is better to face our fears, embrace God’s will, and seek the joyful gift that is beyond any pain we might experience along the way. It is better to heal the sinner than to condemn. If we desire to heal our society of abortion, we need to identify the cause that leads to the illness and deception and expose it to the light of truth with a 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love. We need to live out the sacrificial love of Christ who prayed from the cross, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”



spotlight on the saints



St. Leonard of Noblac

St. Leonard of Noblac

According to the romance that accrued to his name, recorded in an 11th-century *vita*, Leonard was a Frankish noble in the court of Clovis I, founder of the Merovingian dynasty. He was converted to Christianity along with the king, at Christmas 496, by Saint Remigius, Bishop of Reims. Leonard asked Clovis to grant him personally the right to liberate prisoners whom he would find worthy of it, at any time.

Leonard secured the release of a number of prisoners, for whom he has become a patron saint, then, declining the offer of a bishopric— a prerogative of Merovingian nobles— he entered the monastery at Micy near Orléans, under the direction of Saint Mesmin and Saint Lie. Then, according to his legend, Leonard became a hermit in the forest of Limousin, where he gathered a number of followers. Through his prayers the queen of the Franks was safely delivered of a male child, and in recompense Leonard was given royal lands at Noblac, 21 km (13 mi) from Limoges. It is likely that the toponym was derived from the Latin family name Nobilius and the common Celtic element -ac, simply denoting a place. There he founded the abbey of Noblac, around which a village grew, named in his honour **Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat**.

According to legend, prisoners who invoked him from their cells saw their chains break before their eyes. Many came to him afterwards, bringing their heavy chains and irons to offer them in homage. A considerable number remained with him, and he often gave them part of his vast forest to clear and make ready for the labours of the fields, that they might have the means to live an honest life.

St. King Edward the Martyr

The holy and right-believing **King Edward the Martyr** (c. 962 – March 18, 978/979) succeeded his father Edgar of England as King of England in 975, but was murdered after a reign of only a few years. As the murder was attributed to "irreligious" opponents, whereas Edward himself was considered a good Christian, he was glorified as *Saint Edward the Martyr* in 1001; he may also be considered a passion-bearer. His feast day is celebrated on March 18, the uncovering of his relics is commemorated on February 13, and the elevation of his relics on June 20. The translation of his relics is commemorated on September 3.

Edward's accession to the throne was contested by a party headed by his stepmother, Queen Elfrida, who wished her son, Ethelred the Unready, to become king instead. However, Edward's claim had more support—including that of St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury—and was confirmed by the Witan.



St. King Edward, the Martyr

King Edward "was a young man of great devotion and excellent conduct. He was completely Orthodox, good and of holy life. Moreover, he loved God and the Church above all things. He was generous to the poor, a haven to the good, a champion of the Faith of Christ, a vessel full of every virtuous grace."

On King Edward's accession to the throne a great famine was raging through the land and violent attacks were stirred up against monasteries by prominent noblemen who coveted the lands that his father King Edgar had endowed to them. Many of these monasteries were destroyed, and the monks forced to flee. The king, however, stood firm together with Archbishop Dunstan in defense of the Church and the monasteries. For this, some of the nobles decided to remove him and replace him with his younger brother Ethelred.

On March 18, 978, the king was hunting with dogs and horsemen near Wareham in Dorset. During the hunt the king decided to visit his younger brother Ethelred who was being brought up in the house of his mother Elfrida at Corfe Castle, near Wareham. Separating from his retinue, the King arrived alone at the castle. While still on his horse in the lower part of the castle Elfrida offered Edward a glass of mead. While he was drinking it, Edward was stabbed in the back by one of the queen's party. Ethelred himself was then only ten years old, and so was not implicated in the murder.

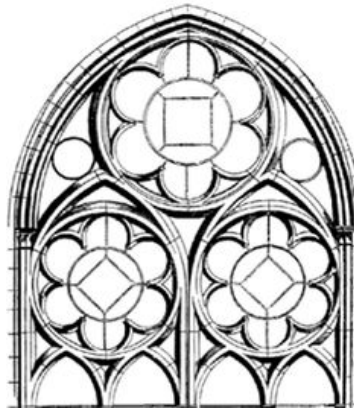
The stories of the relics of St. Edward began at the moment of his death (martyrdom). Immediately following the murder, the body of the murdered king slipped from the saddle of his horse and was dragged with one foot in the stirrup until the body fell into a stream at the base of the hill upon which Corfe Castle stands (the stream was found thereafter to have healing properties—particularly for the blind). The queen then ordered that body be hurriedly hidden in a hut nearby. Within the hut, however, lived a woman who was blind from birth, and whom the queen supported out of charity. During the night, a wonderful light appeared and filled the whole hut. Struck with awe, the woman cried out: "Lord, have mercy!" and suddenly received her sight. At this she discovered the dead body of the king. The church of St. Edward at Corfe Castle now stands on the site of this miracle. At dawn the queen learned of the miracle and was troubled. Again she ordered disposal of the body, this time by burying it in a marshy place near Wareham. A year after the murder, however, a pillar of fire was seen over the place where the body was hidden, lighting up the whole area. This was seen by some of the inhabitants of Wareham, who raised the body. Immediately, a clear spring of healing water sprang up in that place. Accompanied by what was now a huge crowd of mourners, the body was taken to the church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Wareham and buried at the east end of the church. This took place on February 13, 980.

On the account of a series of subsequent miracles, the relics were translated to the abbey at Shaftesbury. When the relics were taken up from the grave, they were found to be whole and incorrupt. The translation of the relics occurred in great procession on February 13, 981, and arrived at Shaftesbury seven days later. There the relics were received by the nuns of Shaftesbury Abbey and were buried with full royal honors on the north side of the altar. On the way from Wareham to Shaftesbury, a further miracle had taken place; two crippled men were brought close to the bier, and those carrying it lowered the body to their level, whereupon the cripples were immediately restored to full health. This procession and these events were re-enacted in 1000 years later in 1981. In 1001, the tomb in which the saint lay was observed to regularly rise from the ground. King Ethelred was filled with joy at this and instructed the bishops to raise his brother's tomb from the ground and place it into a more fitting place. As the tomb was opened a wonderful fragrance issued from it, such that all present "thought that they were standing in Paradise". The bishops then bore away the sacred relics from the tomb and placed them in a casket in the holy place of the saints together with other holy relics. This elevation of the relics of St. Edward took place on June 20, 1001.

St. Edward was officially glorified by the All-English Council of 1008, presided over by St. Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury (who was later also martyred by the Danes in 1012). King Ethelred ordered that the

saint's three feast days (March 18, February 13, and June 20) should be celebrated throughout England. Shaftesbury Abbey was rededicated to the Mother of God and St. Edward. Shaftesbury was apparently renamed "Edwardstowe," only reverting to its original name after the Reformation. Many miracles were recorded at the tomb of St. Edward including the healing of lepers and the blind.

During the sixteenth century, under King Henry VIII of England, monasteries were dissolved and many holy places were demolished, but St. Edward's remains were hidden so as to avoid desecration. In 1931, the relics were recovered by Mr. Wilson-Claridge during an archaeological excavation; their identity was confirmed by Dr. T.E.A. Stowell, an osteologist. In about 1982, Mr. Wilson-Claridge donated the relics to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, which placed them in a church in Brookwood Cemetery, in Woking, Surrey. The St. Edward Brotherhood of monks was organized there as well. The church is now named St. Edward the Martyr Orthodox Church.



	
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THE ICON CORNER

The Nativity Icon: The Good News in Line, Form and Color

By Fr. John Parker

During Catechumens class last weekend, I offered an explanation of the Icon of the Nativity. How beautiful it is that this Holy Icon tells the entire Nativity Story in one remarkable image! In the upper left, we see the three magi, those remarkable Persian Stargazers, who feature prominently in the Troparion of the Nativity: “Thy Nativity O Christ our God, has shown to the world the Light of Wisdom! For by it those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on High. O Lord, Glory to Thee!”

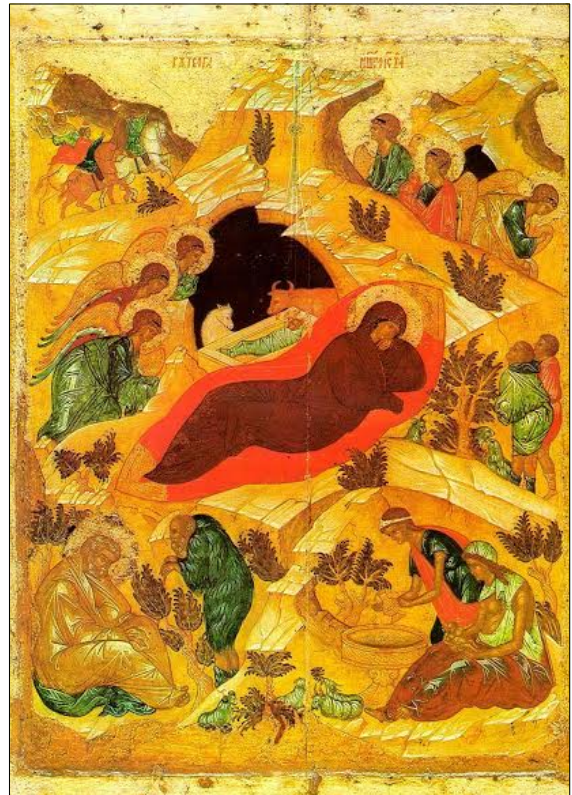
At left middle, a choir of angels gazes in worship, singing to the Newborn King, as recorded in Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth, Peace among men with whom He is pleased!”

At bottom left, we find a curious scene, one interpretation of which is Joseph being tempted to divorce his wife: “And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly” (Matthew 1:19).

At bottom right, we encounter a most human scene: Two nurse-maidens wash the newborn Jesus. What more earthly sign of the incarnation of God in the flesh can there be? Though the divine “Existing One” (Revelation 1:8, a portion of which is recited in nearly every dismissal in the daily services of the Church)—as noted in His nimbus (o wv)—He is a human child. And what do you do with a newborn baby? Clean him up, wash him, and wrap him tightly in a blanket!

The movement from that corner scene to Christ in the manger is natural—there, at center, we see Him post-washing, wrapped not just in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:7), but bound as in the traditional icon of the raising of Lazarus—already in His burial clothes.

With the ox and the ass, we now turn our attention to more specifically evangelistic details of the icon. Who are these mysterious creatures? According to one biblical interpretation, they are one clean animal, and one unclean animal, and thus represent “the whole world,” Jew and Gentile, gazing into the manger of illumination.



More specifically, they are the two animals mentioned in Isaiah 1:3: “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.” There they are, two dumb creatures, the closest to the very person of the newborn Lord of All Creation, making a statement of remarkable proportions: the dumb animals recognize the Messiah, but Israel does not! In light of Isaiah 1:3, a deeper meaning of the two animals appears: The ox and the ass know their master. Do you? Do I? This is an invitation to conviction.

Moving to the middle-right of the scene, we see two shepherds, who are eagerly receiving a word from an angel who blesses them with the name of Jesus on his fingertips. The angel said to them, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12). This is truly an inspiring passage, because it is literally evangelism: “Be not afraid, for behold I ‘evangelize’ you: a great joy shall come to the people today!” The Lord Christ is born! And here is how you can find and recognize Him. Can we not bolster ourselves to be such messengers to our friends and neighbors?

Finally, a most ponderous and ponderable image, in the largest figure in the icon: the Virgin Mary. It should not surprise us that she features prominently at center, and the closest human being to her newborn Son, the Savior of the World. But why is she not facing Him? We recall Luke 2:15ff: “When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” The Mother of God gazes not so much away from Jesus as she does towards the shepherds—who themselves have a double focus: one of receiving, one of giving. These same shepherds who heard the blessed Good News from the angels, turned and told Mary and Joseph. Heard and told, heard and told.

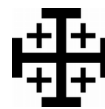
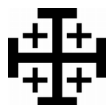
Finally, we make a leap to an earlier passage according to Saint Luke, and one that transports us nine months back—in the Church Year to March 25: “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ And Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be, since I have no husband?’ And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word’” (Luke 1:26-38).

This great promise to a young, holy Virgin is today fulfilled. On March 25, we celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary. On December 25, we celebrate His manifestation in the Flesh to the world.

The latter—the feast at hand—is in Greek called the *Genesis* of the Lord: the beginning of Jesus! The former, the feast of nine months ago: the *Evangelism* of the Theotokos!

Good News. Glad Tidings. Born to us is the Savior of the World, Whose divine mission is to enter the darkness of the world, at the darkest time of the year, in the midst of the darkness of human sin as the Light of the World, the Peace of the World, the Savior of the World. As we sing, “The magi saw, and worshipped. The angels beheld, and sang the Glory of the Lord. Joseph remained faithful to the prompting of the Lord. Angels evangelized. Shepherds, receiving that message likewise announced what they had seen and heard.”

Can we, for whom Christ was born, do any differently? ~Reprinted from the *Orthodox Church in America's Website with permission*



PARISH LIFE



CHRIST THE KING PARISH, Tullytown, Pa ... sponsors a **FOOD BANK MINISTRY** which feeds those in need from our community on a daily basis ... this past Thanksgiving we gave out Turkey dinner baskets to 47 persons ... and we will be giving out Christmas Baskets on Dec. 23rd ... we also hold a monthly community luncheon free to all who are in need of a good meal and some Christian fellowship ... we will be holding our next Luncheon on Nativity Sunday, Jan. 7th after 9 am Liturgy.

HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH in Omaha, Nebraska experienced dynamic growth in 2017, adding twelve new members from eight households to the parish. Three adults and one infant were baptized into Christ, three adults were received by chrismation, and five transferred in from other Orthodox parishes. Only two were over 60 years of age, and four were under 18. The rest were young adults.

Of the seven who were received by baptism or chrismation, one was the infant son of parishioners, three were formerly unchurched adults, while one each was received from Continuing Anglicanism, traditional Roman Catholicism (a parish of the Fraternity of St. Peter), and the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church. The five who transferred in from other parishes were longtime Orthodox Christians who were happy to find a Western expression of the Orthodox Catholic Faith. All are active in the parish.



From L to R: Holy Mass at Holy Cross & First Communion for an infant

ST. EDWARD ORTHODOX CHURCH

in Prince Edward Island, Canada is up and running, although not terribly fast as yet. However, patience is a virtue and "hope springs eternal", reports Fr. Christopher LePage!

"Last weekend at our Saturday 4:00 pm Liturgy, we processed, enthroned and blessed the new Icon of our Patron, Saint Edward the Martyr! What a joy it was! St. Edward King and Martyr is now truly our appointed ecclesiastical intercessor. I know we will find great strength in him as he blesses us as time goes on.



St. King Edward the Martyr

The icon was hand-painted in England on a gold background. It is spectacular. I believe it will garner much attention and devotion from those attending Mass weekly.



The Procession & Blessing of the Nativity Crib with the High Mass at St. Edward the Martyr

REV. CHRISTOPHER LEPAGE AND REV. ADAM TRENT ORDAINED TO THE SACRED ORDER OF PRIESTS IN THE HOLY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Father Adam Trent, left, West Virginia, His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion and Father Christopher LePage are shown at the ordination in the Synod Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in New York City.

On November 7th and 8th, Fr. Adam Trent & Christopher LePage were ordained to the Holy Priesthood of the Orthodox Church by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia at the Russian Orthodox Synod in Manhattan, New York. Fr. Christopher was ordained during the Divine Liturgy on November 7th while Fr. Adam was ordained on November 8th. Incidentally, the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh (**the location for both ordinations*) has been served in the past by St. John Maximovitch of Shanghai & San Francisco.

Fr. Christopher is serving at St. Edward the Martyr Orthodox Church in Prince Edward Island, Canada and Fr. Adam is Rector at St. Leonard Orthodox Church in Keystone West Virginia.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT ORTHODOX CHURCH GETS A NEW WORSHIP SPACE

Fr. Matthieu Trinique of St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church was able to procure a wonderful new worship space in Seattle, Washington. Pictures included below!



From L to R: Fr. Matthieu and parishioners; The altar of their new space

ST. TIKHON ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS A NEW WORSHIP SPACE



Congratulations are in order for Fr. Jonathan Cook and his parishioners for acquiring a beautiful new worship space at the Comboni Missionary Sisters Chapel at 1307 Lakeside Ave in Richmond VA. We've included some pictures below! God is working wonders!



In other news from St. Tikhon's, there is a new member who was Baptised at St. Nino's Monastery in Maryland on December 30 2017. We would like to present Paisios. Abbott Christopher and I baptised Samuel now Paisios.



NEW PARISH AND NEWLY CHRISMATED CHRISTIANS IN TENNESSEE

A brand new mission has been established in Chattanooga, Tennessee. St. Bartholomew's Orthodox Mission will be serving the Chattanooga / Hamilton area. Three of the mission's primary representatives were Chrismated into the Holy Orthodox Church on Saturday, January 13th by The Very Reverend Mitered Archpriest Mark Rowe at the Monastery of the Glorious Ascension. We bid them welcome and Godspeed in the formation of their mission for the greater glory of God!





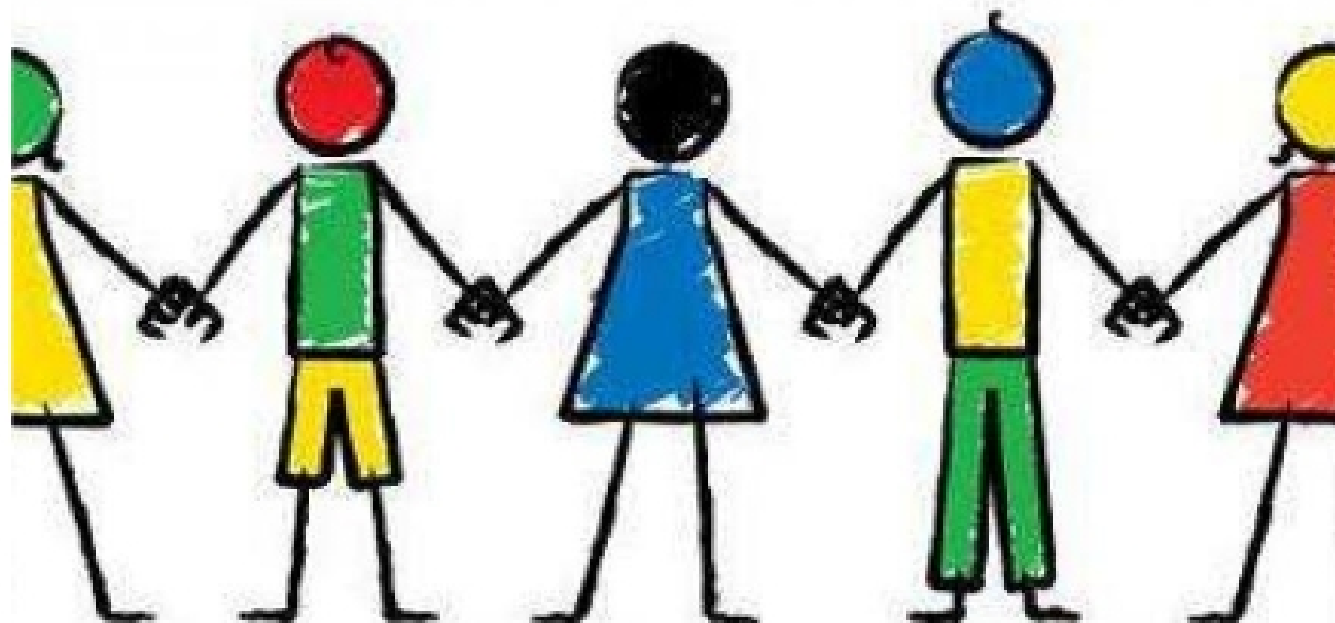
Of your Charity... Please Remember in Your Prayers

- Our Vicar General, The Very Reverend Mitered Archpriest Mark Rowe
 - Those who will be ordained in February 2018
 - Dom James
 - Abbot David
 - Fr. Matthias Brooks & Matushka Susan
 - Fr. Adam
 - Fr. Christopher



ROCOR WESTERN RITE COMMUNITIES

2018 SUMMER YOUTH CAMP



JULY, 2018

MONASTERY OF THE GLORIOUS ASCENSION

RESACA, GA

(MORE INFO TO COME)

The “Season of Giving”, But Can We Give Too Much?

Dcn. Joseph and Matushka Elizabeth (Brousseau)

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

With the Blessed Nativity Season upon us many of us try to come up with a way to give more to those that are in need. Our Lord has told us to clothe the naked, feed the hungry and visit the imprisoned. I am sure many of us try to do these things, as much as we possibly can, but as good Orthodox Christians we strive more and more to make a difference in the lives of those in need around us, especially this time of the Liturgical year.

Our small community here in Southern Nevada, St. David of Wales Western Rite ROCOR Mission, has tried over the last 4 months to come up with a way to make a difference in the lives of those around us who are struggling. We were to launch our outreach in the month of the Birth of Our Lord.

What we found here in the Greater Las Vegas area is that there is a tremendous homeless problem. The population of the homeless here seems to grow and grow. Tent cities are plentiful in plain sight and many homeless people live under the city's streets in storm tunnels and in ditches. If you have been here and have not seen the problem, the powers that be do a “fine job” at keeping this off the Vegas Strip.

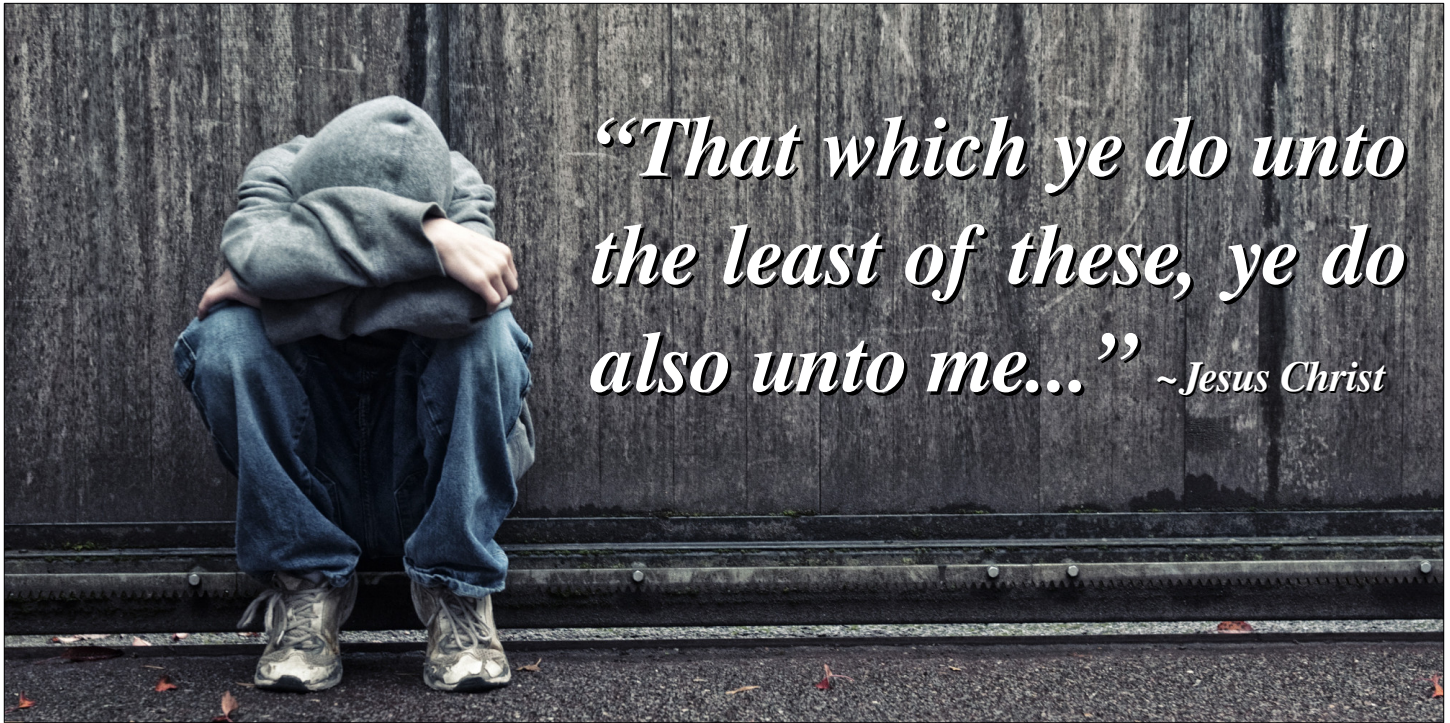
The Saint David of Wales Mission members was presented with this issue as a possible ministerial endeavor and after little debate it was decided that prayer and action were necessary. I also suggested that we look at what is already being done for the homeless community and to try to come up with a plan that will not duplicate what is already being done well, but to do something that is either lacking in service or is not being done at all.

There are several homeless shelters, outreach organizations and government assistance programs in place providing things, such as, but not limited to, clothing, medical care, temporary housing, meals and so much more in the immediate area. Those of us looking at the problem and contemplating how to “jump in” to help definitely did not see a need for more of the same. What we did see is the lack of the difference it is making. Now don't get me wrong, we are not judging our brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, if something's broke it's broke. We understand that all are trying to do what they can and they are trying to make the world a better place, but all too often throwing money at a problem without have a plan of action or a defunct one is not the right thing to do.

We also understand that there are many that get wrapped up in things, because many donate to a specific “call to action”. They end up being less than effective and all too often detrimental to the cause. Since this is what those that donated intended the funding to be used for, so the ministry is locked into the idea originally put forth with little room for change.

Members of our community see daily the abundance of goodness, in the forms of clothing, food and other things thrown in the streets. We see piles of trash, massive amounts of pollution in lots and so many drug and

alcohol abusers using and passing out in the streets and neighboring open areas. All with plenty of material things at their disposal. So many mounds and shopping carts full of so many different things are everywhere. This is not to mention the first responders rushing to the aid of those who have done things like walking out in front of moving vehicles, setting their tents on fire and rushing to help the children of those addicted to alcohol and drugs being neglected. This is just part of the harsh reality that we absorb daily. Obviously, trying to find happiness without a true relationship with God will lead to accumulation of more of nothing and continuous peril.



Thinking of others trying to make a difference, it is very important for us to acknowledge that things happen to those that try to do the Lord's work, but also the Lord understands the need for adjustment and struggle. This is one reason why understanding that the Lord tells us why it is so important not to serve two masters is so imperative to our ministry.

If we were to intertwine ourselves with those outside of the Church, we too would become victims of another master's reach. St. David of Wales Mission was not going to become that. We were not going to just give and give, only to find ourselves in the same place as so many other organizations that have a philanthropic outlook. We were not going to throw money at a problem to make ourselves feel better.

We needed an approach. I remembered that as a prison chaplain in Texas I worked with an Assistant Warden and a priest to find a way to analyze my programming. We needed to see what was working and what wasn't. What we knew was that we weren't going to "get" to everyone, but we'd try and the answer was not giving free stuff over and over again. Again, we all have a lot of stuff. The answer is/was giving direction through the form of Orthodox Christian education. We had to face that everyone will show up for the free meal, but will they be here next time when only the Bread of Life is being offered in the form of speech and literature? We could only try. Believe it or not, many Baptisms and Chrismations have taken place in the prisons in Texas using this approach.

Using this knowledge, St. David of Wales Mission has launched its ministry to the homeless here in the Greater Las Vegas area. We don't doubt other ministry's approaches to working in the Lord's Vineyard, but we are remaining outside of their endeavors.

So for right now, our Christmas approach is to accumulate small publications in the forms of pamphlets to distribute to those who are willing to read what the Lord provides. We are using a personal copy machine to start, but look to make greater progress as the Lord provides. Also, we will start holding educational sessions and liturgical services for those who wish to come out of the ditches, lots and streets. We hope that you will pray for us and for those that we touch.

The success rate of this type of ministry isn't measured by numbers and the downside is the toll it takes on those involved. This is why your prayers are so needed and appreciated. Please feel free to email us prayer request as well. It helps us to teach the need for prayers for others and we love to pray for everyone.

We pray you all have had a Blessed Nativity and for the Lord to give you peace!

Dcn. Joseph and Matushka Elizabeth (Brousseau)



Compline Call

Tuesday Evenings @ 8:00 pm EST

Phone Number: (515) 739-1030

Access Code: 425875525

Visit the Liturgics page of the ROCOR Western Rite Web Page for Text

www.rocor-wr.org/liturgical-resources



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.

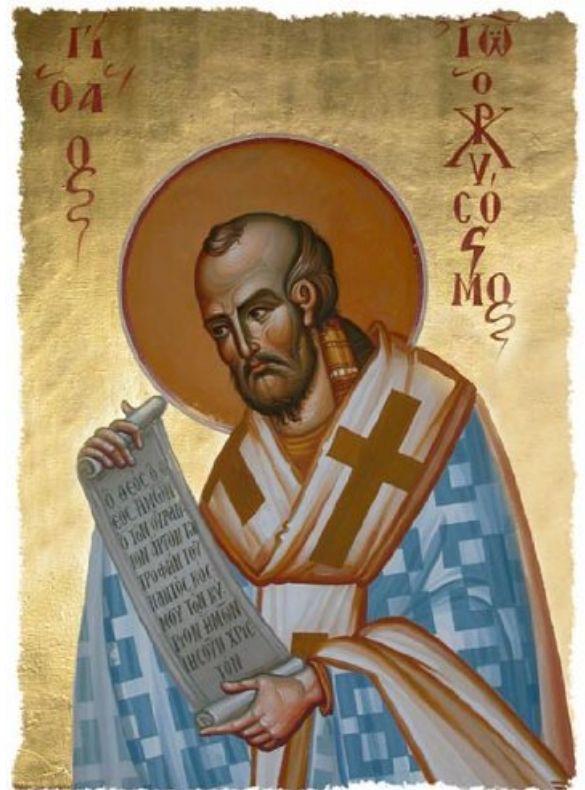
Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all 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.

The Wonderworker is a ministry outreach of the Western Rite Community of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. All articles are from individual authors and are presented here in their original form.

If you are interested in having an article published in The Wonderworker, please send all submissions to wonderworker.info@gmail.com. Please indicate any quoted or otherwise sourced material that is not your own original content.

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