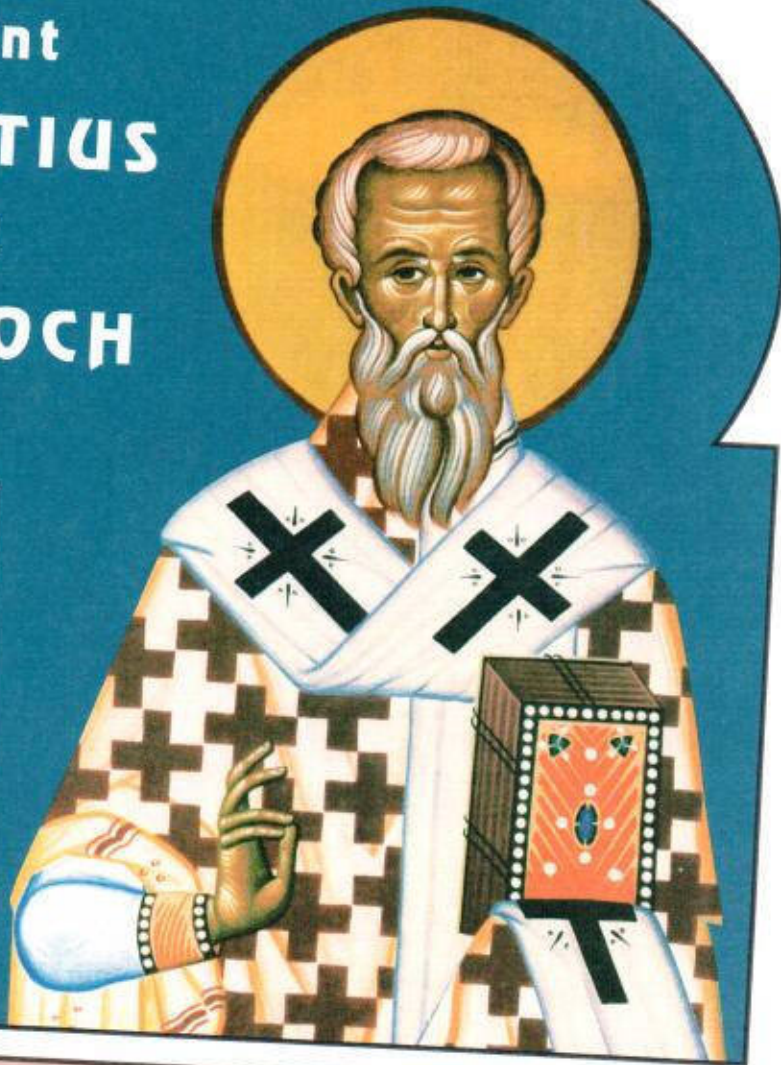


Saint
IGNATIUS
of
ANTIOCH



*"Whoever shall receive this little child
in My name receiveth Me."*

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday Before Nativityt

December 21, 2014

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,
Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 - 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Please be generous in honoring the new-born Saviour of the world with your generous stewardship offering.

+++ We thank sincerely all the good souls who labored to make yesterday's Bake Sale a success. God bless you devoted souls with an abundance of grace!

+++ Please remember Wednesday, the Vigil of the Nativity, is a day of strict fast. We are gifted to abstain from meat and dairy products.

+++ We encourage our faithful to remember in prayer and light candles for loved ones, especially parents and family members who have gone to their eternal reward.

+++ In our joy over the Nativity of our Lord, there is no fasting until the Feast of Theophany, January 6.

+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please remember we are in the Nativity Fast which began yesterday. Impose seriously on yourself the prescriptions of the Church that our hearts and souls become worthy mangers of our Saviour on the feast of His Nativity. Fast from sin, meat and dairy products that your soul is enriched. Prior to all services, Confessions are heard, so come and unburden yourself from the sinful weight you carry.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Father George, Anna, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Nicholas, Pani Anna Marie and Andrea.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$412.00; Candles, \$22.00; Flowers, \$170.00; Holyday, \$15.00; Food Coupons, \$220.00; Kitchen, \$589.00, for a total of \$1428.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1818.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

Let's

**C E L
E B R
A T E!**

the Nativity of our Lord!

Meditation

In the Gospel we do not find discourses on the family but an event that is worth more than any words: God wanted to be born and to grow up in a human family. In this way, he consecrated the family as the first and ordinary means of his encounter with humanity.

In his life spent at Nazareth, Jesus honored the Virgin Mary and the righteous Joseph, remaining under their authority throughout the period of his childhood and his adolescence. In this way he shed light on the primary value of the family in the education of the person.

Jesus was introduced by Mary and Joseph into the religious community and frequented the synagogue of Nazareth. With them, he learned to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem

When he was 12 years old, he stayed behind in the Temple and it took his parents all of three days to find him. With this act he made them understand that he "had to see to his Father's affairs," in other words, to the mission that God had entrusted to him.

This Gospel episode reveals the most authentic and profound vocation of the family: that is, to accompany each of its members on the path of the discovery of God and of the plan that he has prepared for him or her.

Mary and Joseph taught Jesus primarily by their example: In his parents he came to know the full beauty of faith, of love for God and for his Law, as well as the demands of justice, which is totally fulfilled in love. ...

The Holy Family of Nazareth is truly the "prototype" of every Christian family which, united in the sacrament of marriage and nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, is called to carry out the wonderful vocation and mission of being the living cell not only of society but also of the Church, a sign and instrument of unity for the entire human race.

Wisdom! Be Attentive

Through faith, O Christ, You justified the patriarchs, for through them, You made a commitment to a Church with gentiles. These saint are glorified because from them descends the Virgin who gave You birth. Through their prayers, O Christ our God, have mercy on us Troparion, Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs.

You did not worship a man-made image, O thrice-blessed youths! Protected by a power beyond description, you were glorified in the test of fire. From the searing flames you cried out to God, saying; "Hasten to help us, O merciful Lord, for in your greatness, You can do whatever You will Kontakion of the Three Holy Youths.

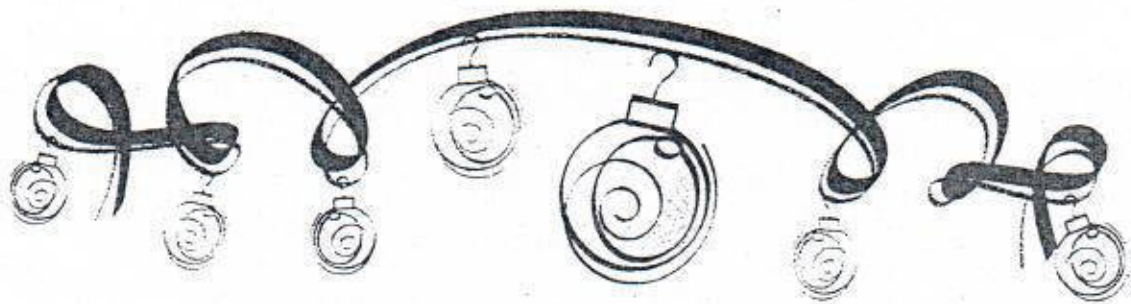
Blessed are You, and praiseworthy, O Lord, the God of our fathers and glorious forever is your Name Prokimenon, Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs.

Great are the deeds performed with faith by three youths rejoicing in the flaming furnace as if they stood in refreshing waters; and Daniel the Prophet faced lions as though they were sheep. Through their prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls Troparion, Sunday of the Holy Fathers.

Rejoice, O Bethlehem and make ready O Ephrata! Behold a Virgin is on her way to give birth to the Great Shepherd she carries in her womb. The God-bearing forefathers will rejoice at his sight and together with the shepherds, they will glorify him in the Virgin's arms Kontakion, Preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

At that time, since Mary was of the house of David, she registered with the venerable Joseph in Bethlehem. She was with child, having conceived virginally. Her time was come, and they could find no room in the inn, but the cave seemed a joyful palace for the Queen. Christ is to be born to renew the likeness that had been lost of old Troparion, Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord.

Today the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth in a manner beyond understanding to the Word who is eternal. Rejoice, therefore, universe, when you hear it heralded together with the angels and the shepherds, glorify him who chose to be seen as a new-born Child, while remaining God for all eternity Kontakion, Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord.



The Nativity of our Lord is upon us; it is that time of year,
so spread good will to all men and be of good cheer.

We will buy gifts for our loved ones.

We will dress our homes with bright lights.

We will hear songs about jingle bells and go to parties at night.

We will see pictures of Santa, a symbol of the season
and we may often lose sight of the day's larger reason.

As we head to parties and leave our kids with the sitter,
let us never forget that it is something more to consider.

The Nativity of our Lord is not for wine and balls made of cheeses,
it is about the birth of our Lord, the man we call Jesus,
born to die for our sin, born a sacrificial lamb,

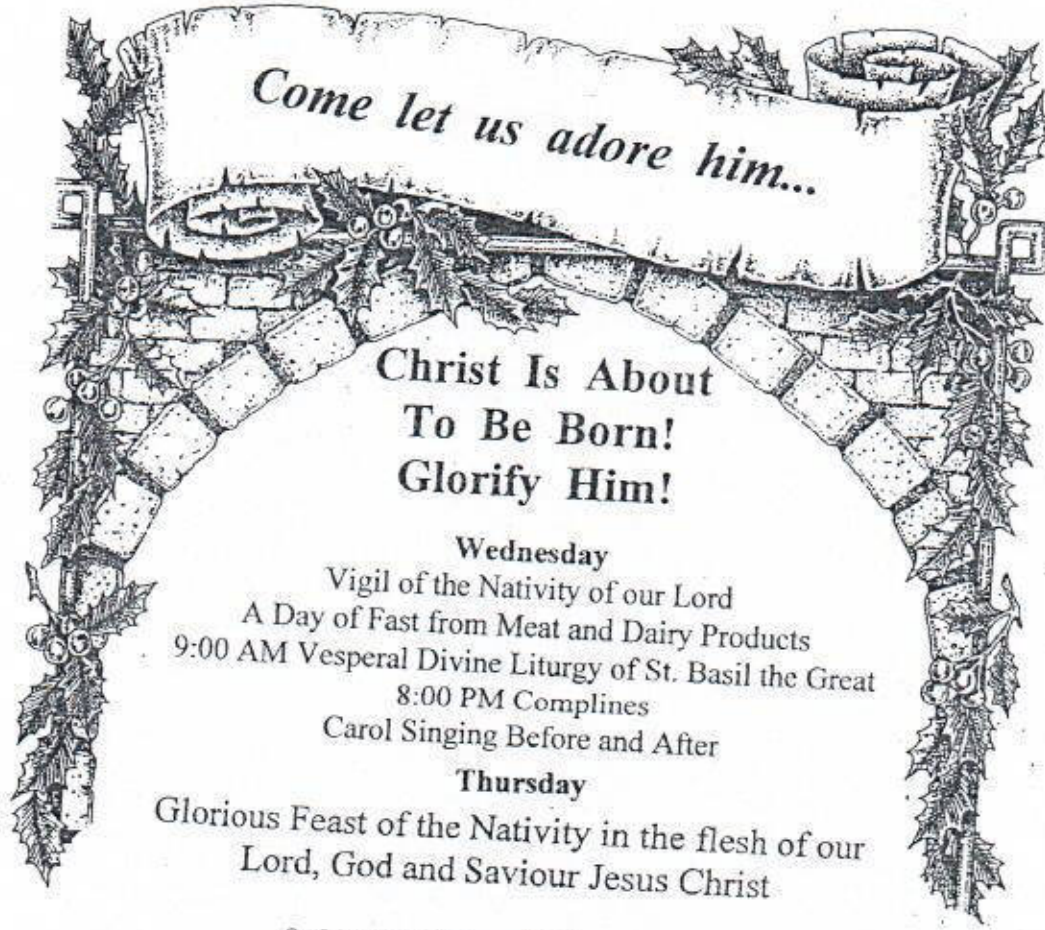
a gift from God above, who said, "I am who am."

Santa may reward us for our good behavior,
but everlasting life comes only from our Saviour.

For many in this world, He is but a stranger,
just some old story of a baby, born in a manger.

So as we enjoy the delights that this season brings,
share the news of the birth
of the King of Kings!





Come let us adore him...

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

Wednesday

Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord

A Day of Fast from Meat and Dairy Products

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

8:00 PM Complines

Carol Singing Before and After

Thursday

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

9:30 AM Solemn Divine Liturgy
Festal Anointing

Friday

Feast of the Birthgiver of God

7:30 PM Divine Liturgy

Saturday

Feast of St. Stephen Martyr

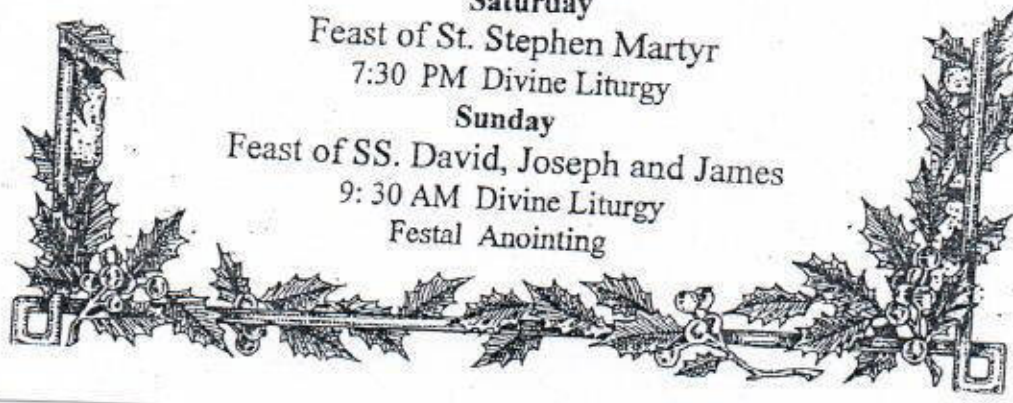
7:30 PM Divine Liturgy

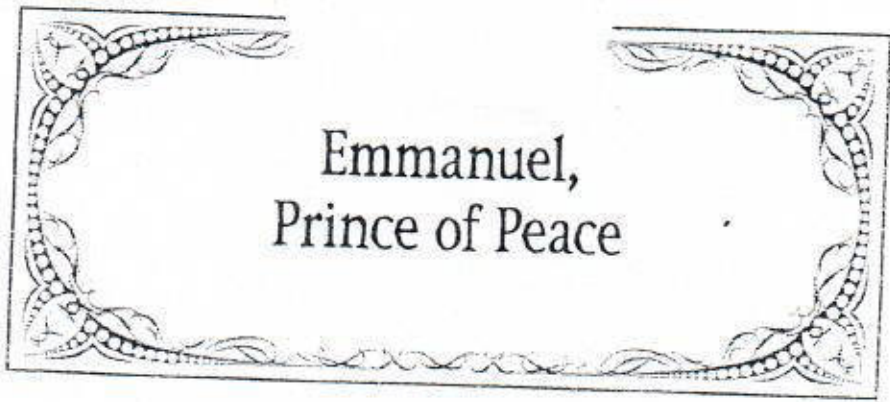
Sunday

Feast of SS. David, Joseph and James

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

Festal Anointing





Emmanuel, Prince of Peace

*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.*

ISAIAH 9:5

*And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly
host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory
to God in the highest and on earth peace to those
on whom his favor rests."*

LUKE 2:13-14

*Today true peace came down from heaven.
Today the heavens drip honey upon the whole earth.
Today a new day dawns, the day of our redemption,
Prepared by God from ages past, the beginning
of our deliverance and of our never-ending gladness.*

It is an astonishing fact and yet most Christians never completely acknowledge it, from the very beginning, from the prophets on, the person of the Messiah was always announced as a messenger of peace. Isaiah, in speaking of the coming Messiah, proclaims a new era of great peace and goes as far as to call him Prince of Peace. On the day of the Lord's Nativity we hear once again the same message in the singing of the

angels: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." Peace, not conflict, violence or wars, the true peace that descends from heaven, is the trademark of the Messiah, the Son of God who comes to dwell among us, the Prince of Peace.

And yet today, just as in the time of Christ, we are surrounded by noisy, cruel, wars approved by our savvy politicians, by the violence that we bring upon one another, by endless deaths caused by our own troops in the name of those who represent us. Could all this be in accord with the message of the Prince of Peace? Could it be that He approves of this ghastly inhuman behavior we cast upon one another? These are some of the questions that an honest disciple of Christ is compelled to ask at this time when we celebrate and pay lip service to the birth of our Prince of Peace.

There ought be no doubt in our minds that Christ is opposed to every form of human violence. He plainly rebukes his disciples when they tried to defend him by saying to them "all who take up the sword shall perish by the sword." The Lord, good Master that He is, never minced words and the apostles and early disciples of the Lord understood this correctly. It was told of many former Roman soldiers that once they were baptized into Christ, they laid down their sword. When asked why, they simply responded that now as soldiers of Christ they could no longer bear arms and kill anyone. To these early Christians the Lord's teaching is plain, clear and simple. There was no room for doubt or for reinterpreting the teaching of the Lord. They knew that in the books of the Gospel the recourse to violence is never acceptable, never justified. And they heard Isaiah's prophetic words and took them seriously:

They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation
shall not raise the sword against another,
nor shall they train for war again Isaiah 2: 4.

Our coming celebration of the Nativity of our Lord is one of great hope, for we are given a clear occasion to hear again the message of Christ in peace; we are given the chance to honor the Prince of Peace and to renew our commitment to this teaching. We must continually plead with people of the world, of all nations, to stop all wars and recourse to war. We must continually cry out, "War, never again, no way. Never!" So we do not send a personal message, but plead for the message of the gospel of Christ to be heard, accepted and understood, then finally lived. We must not issue the rejoicing words ourselves, but assume them in the name of Christ whom Isaiah represents. Christ asks all people to choose the way of nonviolence and to walk along the path of peace traced by

Christ for us. By choosing to oppose all violence and instead live in harmony ~~and~~ peace with others, even our so-called enemies, we make a direct choice to foster and extend the kingdom of God, the only true kingdom. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Romans, is explicit about this: "The kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by others. Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another" Romans 14: 17 - 19.

Our Christian hope is a clear invitation from the Lord to become instruments of his peace, true peacemakers. In the Sermon on the Mount, we hear the Lord proclaim: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This is not pure coincidence but simply the same message conveyed by the angels on the first night of his birth. To become in truth Christian peacemakers, after the example of the Lord himself, we must accept the risk of being controversial, countercultural, and being taken as a fool by others, just like many of the true disciples of Jesus before us.

All of these people are rejected because of their evangelical views and example, It was the price they paid for true discipleship. It takes a profound faith in God's word and promise, a fierce inner fortitude and plenty of God's grace to accept the challenge to become a peacemaker in Christ, our best model and Master. Indeed, to work for peace entails accepting the ministry of reconciliation among all people, among those hostile to each other, among nations at war, among family members, neighbors and communicants in the Church still at discord with each other. There is nothing romantic about becoming a true peacemaker. It involves hard work, dying to self daily, fidelity to prayer, extreme humility, and total obedience to God's Word. Only by doing this can we become, instruments of peace.

Our challenge as believers in Christ, is to renew our commitment to the message of Christ's birth sung by the angels and to do everything possible to foster and implement peace and harmony among the people of earth, for He who comes as Saviour of all is also the Prince of Peace to all the world.



A Hymn to the Prince of Peace

*Behold a broken world, we pray,
Where want and war increase,
And grant, Lord, in this our day,
The ancient dream of peace:
A dream of swords to sickles bent,
Of spears to scythe and spade,
The weapons of our warfare spent,
A world of peace remade.
Where every battle flag is furled
And every trumpet stilled,
Where wars shall cease in all the world.
A waking dream fulfilled.
No force of arms shall there prevail
Nor justice cease her sway;
Nor shall their loftiest visions fail
The dreamers of the day.
O Prince of Peace, who died to save,
A lost world to redeem,
And rose in triumph from the grave,
Behold our waking dream.
Bring, Lord, your better world to birth,
Your kingdom, love's domain;
Where peace with God, and peace on earth,
And peace eternal reign.*

The Mary Jesus Loved

Rejoice highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women

Luke 1: 28.

Mary held fast through her faith. Meditation on what we know and understand about the Mother of Jesus, the Birthgiver of God, teaches us that it is only through faith that we can stay close to the Saviour of mankind. Mary's faith of steel enabled her to do exactly what she had to do to be loved so dearly by her Son. She accepted his mysterious ways; she kept silent; where she did speak and express herself, it was briefly, fully and effectively.

The Mary of the gospel and not the Mary of our daydreams, and for some, nightmares, is this strong woman who goes forth with a robust faith, in silence, with sound judgment and in wisdom born of intimate association with her Creator God. She is the woman who continually grows in her capacity to remain close to Jesus against all odds. Mary was Jesus' most perfect follower. That is why He loved her so much. Real devotion to Mary is devotion to the Mary whom Jesus loved so dearly.

Those who sidestep the Gospel in their search for Mary invented a worried mother who wants always to protect her children against the perils of life. Those who seek her with the Gospel discover that she was never fearful for herself or for Jesus. She will not be fearful for us either. We must ask only one thing of her: to help us, to assist us in knowing Jesus better and to become another Jesus. That is precisely what asking her to be Mary of the Gospels means.

We see from her response to the angelic visitor she is most familiar with God's revelation to us, with Scripture itself. May this familiarity also characterize us as well.

Nativity Blessing

**May the Angel of Annunciation
awaken in you**

God's profound heartfelt love...

**May your dreams lead you to profound reverence
as you bow before the Divine born in the stable of every heart...**

**May Mary guide you in birthing the Holy One
in your life and in birthing
love in others.**

**May Joseph engage you in deeper
questioning and listening
and give you courage to risk the next step.**

**May your life become a
Luminous Presence
leading others to the place in their hearts
and in the world where
Christ
is always being born anew.**

The Magic of
Christ's Nativity in the flesh

is not in the
presents but

in

His

presence
Matthew 1: 23.



IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER

Christ's disciples often questioned Him about their place in the Kingdom of Heaven. On one such occasion, our Lord called out to a small child, held him in His arms and proclaimed: "WHOEVER HUMBLER HIMSELF AS THE LITTLE CHILD IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." Jesus bestowed a spark of divinity with the touch of His hand and this young lad grew up to become St. Ignatius.

After his encounter with Christ, Ignatius remained close to the Apostles. He became a student of St. John, the beloved disciple of the Lord, and he eagerly learned as much as he could about the Divine Saviour that he sought to serve. Ignatius quickly proved himself to be worthy of having been singled out by Christ. He travelled extensively, spreading the Gospel. As a reward for his missionary efforts, St. Ignatius was appointed Bishop of the important city of Antioch, a center of Christianity in the early Church.

As Bishop, St. Ignatius displayed great writing skills. He addressed various Christian communities on matters such as: personal sacrifice, obedience to church authority and preserving the true doctrine of the Church against heretics and unbelievers. He was viewed as a model shepherd by believers everywhere, becoming one of the most admired and beloved hierarchs of his time.

The details of Ignatius' pious reputation reached the ears of the Emperor Trajan. While passing through Antioch, Trajan sought out this "God-bearer" and offered him a position in the Roman Senate if he would make the customary sacrifices to the Roman idols. When Ignatius refused, the enraged Emperor had him taken to Rome and thrown to the lions. He suffered martyrdom unafraid, for he knew that his reward would be great in heaven: something Christ Himself had promised long ago.