

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Nativity In The Flesh Of Our Lord

December 25, 2015

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 remember the Nativity feast is a three-day celebration. Be here in prayer and praise at 9:30 AM tomorrow and 9:30 AM on Sunday! Tomorrow, on the feast of the Birthgiver of God, you will be anointed with the miraculous Myrrh Bearing Oil and Sunday with oil from the tomb of our Lord in Jerusalem.

- +++ 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.
- +++ We thank our children for decorating the church for this glorious feast day. May the Lord continue to bless you with good health for Many & Blessed Years!
- +++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, 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, \$616.00; Candles, \$14.00; Holyday, \$5.00; Kitchen, \$4378.00, Flowers. \$31.00; Nativity of our Lord, \$131.00, for a total of \$5184.00. 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 \$1851.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.
- +++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using Shop Rite Food Coupons available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite ALL to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$6750 on this project to date!
- +++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.
- +++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us the grace of enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.
- +++ Please be prepared to light a Votive Candle in honor of the Lord's Birth among us.



Christ Is Born!

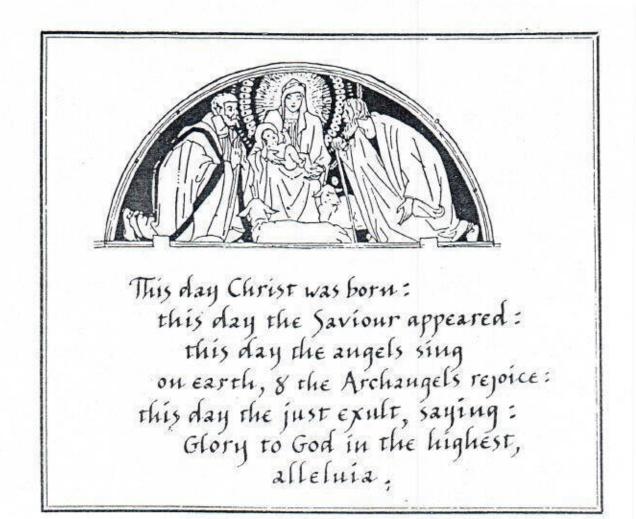
While they were there the days of her confinement were completed. She gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged Luke 2: 6, 7.

The angel of the Lord shone around them, and they were very much afraid. The angel said to them: "You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you; tidings of great joy to be shared with the whole people. This day in David's city a Saviour has been born to you, the Messiah and Lord. Let this be a sign to you: in a manger you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes." Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, peace to men of good will" Luke 2: 9-14.

Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, in accord with what had been told them." Luke 2: 19.

The feal light which gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and through him the world was made, yet the world did not know who he was. To his own he came, yet his own did not accept him. Any who did accept him he empowered to become children of God. These are they who believe in his name, who were begotten, not by blood, nor carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory; the glory of the only-begotten Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love John 1: 9 - 14.

I have come into the world as its light, to keep anyone who believes in me from remaining in the dark John 12: 46.



Feast Day Felicitations

Christ Is Born! Just as the angels could not contain themselves and were impelled to share the eternally joyous news of Christ's Birth, so we too, sing out to you our joy of heart and soul. Our salvation is at hand in this Infant of Bethlehem. And when they heard the glorious good news, the shepherds also shared it with their friends. As a parish family, let us embrace one another in Christ's love and affirm our faith commitment to the Son of God Who comes among us today as a child. As we greet one another, let us remember it is the love of Christ that unites us by the grace of His all Holy and adorable Spirit. Let us share this merriment of heart and soul and permit it a generous contagion in our midst. Let us join the angelic chorus in singing His praises. Let us thank the Eternal Father for this unspeakable Gift. Let us so live that He is glorified in our midst. A very blessed, holy, happy celebration to all entrusted to our spiritual care of this magnificent expression of God's love for us. Glorify Him!

REMEMBRANCE OF OUR ANCESTORS IN THE FAITH

Now will I praise those godly men [and women], our ancestors, each in his [or her] own time: The abounding glory of the Most High's portion, his own part, since the days of old.

Subduers of the land in kingly fashion, men of renown for their might, Or counselors in their prudence, or seers of all things in prophecy;

Resolute princes of the folk, and governors with their staves;

Authors skilled in composition, and forgers of epigrams with their spikes;

Composers of melodious psalms, or discoursers on lyric themes;

Stalwart men [and women], solidly established and at peace in their own estates—

All these were glorious in their time, each illustrious in his [or her] day.

Their wealth remains in their families, their heritage with their descendants;

Through God's covenant with them their family endures, their posterity for their sake.

And for all time their progeny will endure, their glory will never be blotted out; Their bodies are peacefully laid away, but their name lives on and on.

At gatherings their wisdom is retold, and the assembly proclaims their praise.

The Nativity of our Lord

Once upon a silent night
Love came down to earth
as the heavenly angels'
song of peace proclaimed
the Saviour's birth.
Curious shepherds followed
a new star's blazing light
and found there in that humble place
the hope we share tonight.

. .

Glory to God

"Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth to men of good will" Luke 2: 14. It is our unique privilege as believers to give glory to God. As we come to understand our Heavenly Father through His words and deeds, we thank and praise Him. Thus we offer Him glory. In giving glory to God, we become the glory of God because we are a visible manifestation of God. Today we celebrate the Source and Summit of the glory of God, Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son manifested in human flesh. Jesus Christ is the concrete reality perfectly transparent to divinity. Jesus is the glory of God. As we appreciate, praise, and worship the Son of God, we become like Him, we become the glory of God. As we give glory to God by glorifying His Son, Jesus Christ, we become the glory of God. To the extent we become the glory of God by His grace, we receive and live His peace which is imparted to mankind.

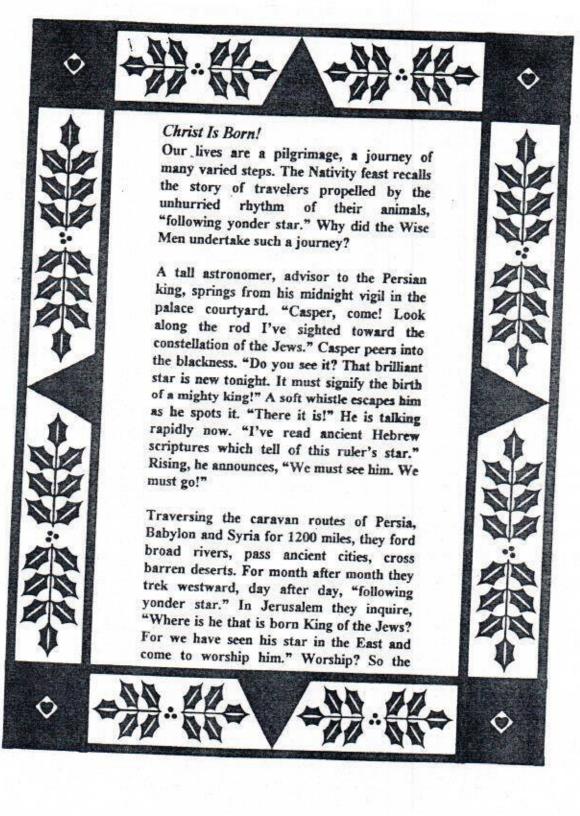
Our Heavenly Father looks up the state of our faith commitment and grants us a corresponding beace of soul. During this Nativity season, may our Heavenly Father grant each of us the awareness to fully perceive this great truth. By our prayer and devotional life in the sacramental Mysteries, may we come to know that as we glorify God, we become His glory. Our only true glory is becoming more and more like the Divine Son Whose Nativity we celebrate!

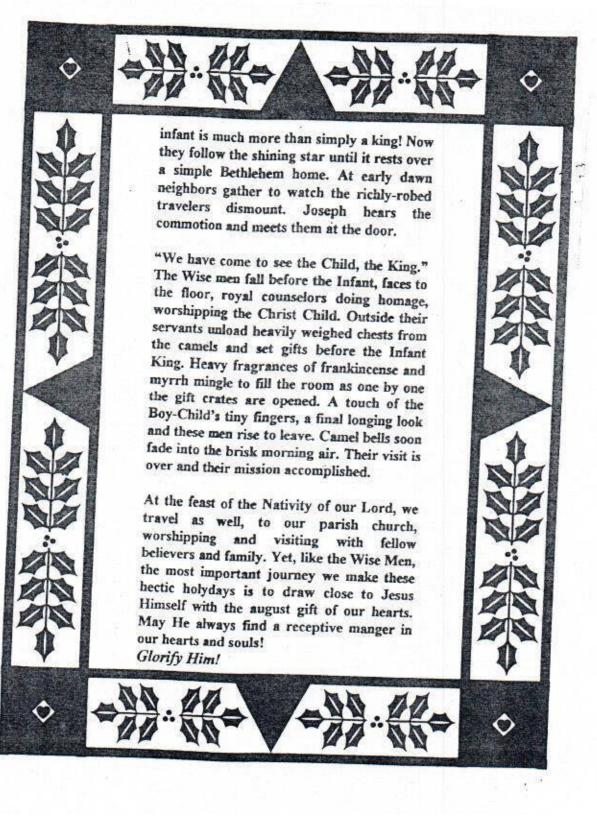
ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

This is the month, and this the happy morn, Wherein the Son of Heav'ns eternal King, Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born, Our great redemption from above did bring; For so the holy sages once did sing, That he our deadly forfeit should release, And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

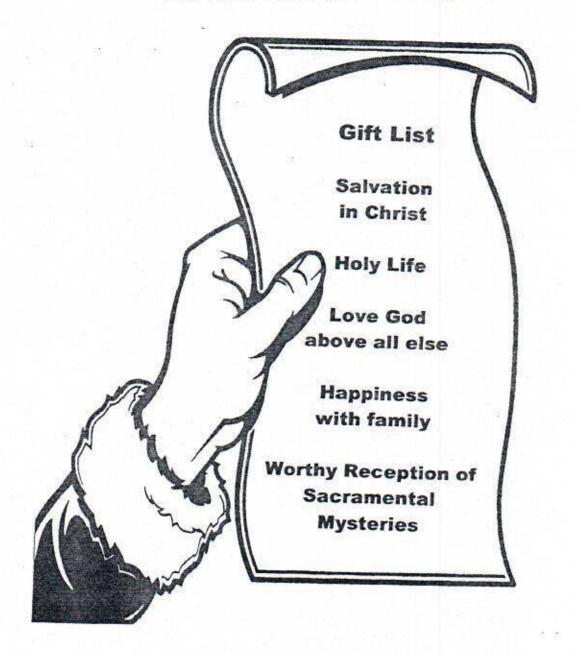
-John Milton, 1629







Will Santa Claus receive this kind of Wished-For Gift-List from your family???



LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The Physician Luke begins the story of the life of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer in the Light and ends it in Darkness. As we celebrate this feast of the Nativity of our Lord, it is good for us to remember that our Lord was born at night, but it was light, for the glory of the Lord shown in the heavens. Our Lord died in the daytime, but it was pitch black darkness at noon for the "sun was darkened" Luke 23: 45. Our Lord was born in the light of night, but He died in the darkness of day. No, it was certainly not coincidence at all because the Saviour came into this old dark world, to be the Light of salvation. To all who accept Him, He is indeed the" Light of the world" John 9: 5. He came into the world and the world was made by Him, and yet the world knew Him not. "He came unto his own and his own received him not" John 1: 11.

He Who came to be the "...revealing light to the Gentiles, the glory of your people Israel" Luke 2: 32, proceeded to the Cross instead, there to enter the regions of darkness to lift us and elevate us to everlasting life in the Resurrection. Those awful dark three hours must have been for some real purpose on the Cross and the three days He spent entombed in darkness had an even greater purpose. Was it then that Jesus descended into "outer darkness" Matthew 8: 12, for us, and suffered the agony in the place of the righteous dead, which was separation from God?

It would seem to be explained for our sake that from the pulpit of the Cross, He cries out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Matthew 27: 46. Surely the darkness was chosen by the Eternal Father to obviate something to the eyes of the shrieking, blood-thirsty mob. What transpired between the Eternal Father and His Divine Son during those three hours and later, in those three days in the tomb?

It is such holy ground, so highly sanctified time, so profoundly spiritual space that our God pulled down the shades of heaven and snuffed out the light of the sun and would not permit unholy eyes to behold the secret, last rendezvous of Father and Son as the mission of redemption was being completed.

Our Lord died in the darkness of our sinfulness that we might live and sacrifice our lives in the light of assurance, security and salvation. The sun in darkness hid and covered His eternal glory when the Son of God died for the sin of His creation. It was the Cross that revealed the love of God at its best and the sin of man at its worst.

Son of Man

We read from God's revelation to us, "The Word became flesh" John 1: 14, and over some sixty times, in the gospels, Our Lord refers to Himself as "the Son of Man" Matthew 8: 20; Luke 9: 58; Mark 8: 38; John 3:13, fully identifying Himself with us! Along with being unchangeably the Son of God, He reveals Himself as being completely and totally human. There is no agony, distress, fear, hunger, thirst, trial, or suffering which man can experience which this Child in the manger did not come to pass through or experience, except that of sin itself.

Man was, in his original state after creation in paradise a very noble and exalted creature. Being placed as the head and lord of creation, he had all creation in subjection to him. The powers and operations of his mind and soul were extensive, capacious and perfect; capable of contemplating upon the works of God with pleasure and delight and of performing His will without the least deviation. He daily spoke with God and basked in His presence. But by sinning against the Creator, his mind was vitiated, his soul corrupted and debased and he finally found himself in a ruined, lost, miserable and wretched state. He was ashamed to encounter God and hid from the Source of his being. "This means that even though I want to do what is right, a law that leads to wrongdoing is always ready at hand. My inner self agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me a prisoner of the law of sin in my members. What a wretched man I am!" Romans 7: 22 - 24.

Man reduced himself by sinning against his Maker and even if he is possessed of the most exquisite natural accomplishments, and has improved his reason to the highest pitch, without Christ, he remains separated from God by choice. "The natural man does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God. For him, this is absurdity. He cannot come to know such teaching because it must be appraised in a spiritual way. The spiritual man, on the other hand, can appraise everything, though he himself can be appraised by no one. For, 'Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ" 1 Corinthians 2: 14-16. Christ the Man comes among us, seen and recognized by those of gifted faith as Christ-God Who transforms the natural man by grace "...till we become one in faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature" Ephesians 4: 13, "...so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work" 2 Timothy 3: 17.

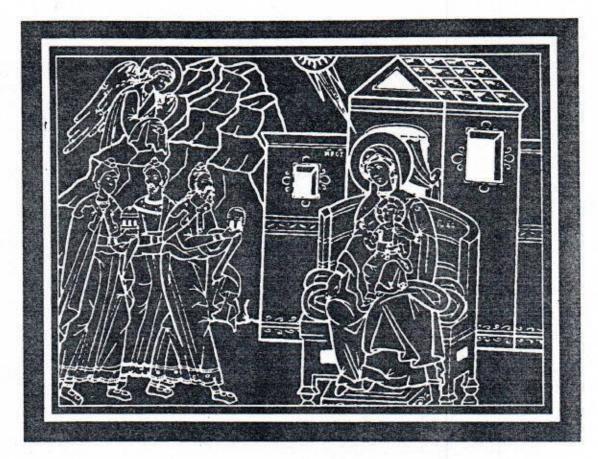
Christ comes among us and He shows Himself to be Brother to the sick neighbor, to the mixed up and confused teen-ager who wants to be herself and yet slavishly follows her sister slaves, in

all their habits, to the prisoner in agony of sentenced confinement, paying for crime in prison, to the "rock and roller", to the joy-starved butterfly of a girl pretending she is having a good time, and to the existentialists, the atheists, the mockers. There is not a person in the entire world who does not feel within himself the triple rebellion which has passed on to us through the rebellion of humanity when it began in Adam and Eve, namely, lust, or the war of the erotic value against the spiritually reasonable; pride, or the exaltation of the ego with its contempt of neighbor; or finally, greed, or the inordinate tendency to make character identical with having rather than being.

Can it be that the repercussions of the first sin are greater in humanity than the results and repercussions of the Incarnation of Christ, of His coming among us in the flesh? Shall the first Adam exercise a greater impact and profounder influence on us than the second Adam? If everyone without exception has Adam in us as our head in the natural physical order, is not every man, regardless of his status or stature, a sharer in some way of our Head in the divine order of salvation? Why do so many, including so-called believers treat Him like a step-brother instead of as their spiritual brother? Why can't we recognize Him as the Son of God in man's flesh, come to redeem us and raise us to His own divine dignity? Why is it we would rather see Him merely as another man, like the first Adam, or simply just like all men, thus remaining comfortable in our self-perceived "human" status? Why is it we do not see our humanity and its rightful destiny as being associated and intimately united with Christ our God? Have we been so blinded by the results of the sin of the first Adam, we cannot distinguish the truth which shows us man is still rightfully destined for eternity if he would but assume the grace of the Holy Spirit and become Christ-like? Then Christ's humanity and our own would have credible meaning in inspiring us to live up to our vocation as His brothers and sisters.

There is a distance of some thirty years that separates the shepherds who, "...once they saw they understood what had been told them concerning this child" Luke 2: 17, and the pagan governor, Pilate shouting "Behold the Man" John 19: 5, but it is the same Person, the Son of God Who came in our flesh, Who was not ashamed in our frail humanity to become the Brother of poor mortals and more importantly, our Saviour.

Man should therefore, as a result of this feast of the Nativity of our Lord be so inspired and uplifted that he always perseveringly appropriates his rightful destiny and dignity in Christ. Otherwise, he remains, in spite of freely offered salvation, satisfied with remaining on the outside of paradise looking in. He remains satisfied existing in the darkness of sin and alienation instead of being united to the Source of light and life. If we learn anything from this feast, it should be to grasp and utilize the grace of the Son of God becoming Man so man can rightfully become like God, and return to his original status in paradise!



Today the Virgin gives birth to Perfect Essence and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.

The angels sing his glory with the shepherds; the wise men journey with the star for there is born for us an Infant Child, GOD ETERNAL.

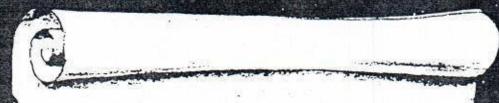
Not For "Nice People"

The name that was given to God Who became Man is Jesus, which means Saviour because He shall save His people from their sins. This feast day is certainly not just for "nice" people, but essentially intended for "nasty" people. "Nice" people think they are special, that they are good, and so have no need of a Saviour. "Nasty" people, however, come to Him because they are convertible, aware of their own imperfections and deep sense of needing to be cleansed; they long for purification and forgiveness. Their emptiness is not meaningless like that of the Grand Canyon which just offers an astounding view, but rather like the emptiness of the manger that longed to be filled with the warmth and fulfillment of the Saviour Infant. They have a hunger and thirst for something not of themselves, and so they look to the Lord in the manger Who is very fond of "nasty" people.

One of the charges against Him later in life was that He ate with sinners, and spent inordinate time with the outcasts of society. The lost sheep was put upon the shoulders of the Good Shepherd and the ninety nine were left in the field. Even the lost coin was found, and made an occasion for rejoicing, but there was no party or celebration for the other nine sheep who were secure. The Saviour takes a child on His knees and says that he will enter the kingdom of Hearth before the university professor. Because the Lord preferred "nasty" people to the "nice" people, it is very likely that if we would look up into Heaven we should see some sights that would scandalize us like the Pharisees were upset at the sight of Christ with His acquaintances and friends. We would say, "Well, how did that woman get there?" or "How did he get in? I knew him when..."

There will be many in heaven whom we never expected to see there. What may astound the greatest number of people and even surprise us is that we will be there. God would still be infinite Goodness even if He had never made the world, but unless "nasty" people had existed He never could have shown His mercy toward us, and it is likely that He would never have become man. Consequently, there would not have been a need for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord!

So the Saviour comes to redeem those who are lost and need salvation. He comes to seek those who need to be found. He comes to find the lost sheep because the secure one is already in the sheep fold. It is the hateful person who needs to be warmed by God's love; it is the stingy heart that needs to be opened by God's generosity; it is the narrow soul which needs to have its horizons widened by the Lord; it is he who does not know God's love who needs to be introduced to it; it is he that sins who finds the most benefit from the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation.



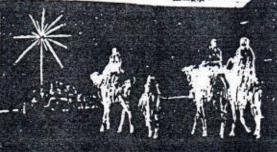
- eloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God.
- od's love was revealed in our midst in this way: he sent his only Son to the world that we might have life through him.
- ove, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God but that he has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins.
- eloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another.
- od is love, and he who lives in love lives in God and God in him.

I John 4



Nativity Of Our Lord

Blessings



WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has shed upon the world the light of knowledge; for though it, those who worshipped the stars have learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of Justice, and to recognize You as the Orient from high, Glory be to You, O Lord! Troparion, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

Today, the Virgin gives birth to perfect Essence, and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels sing His glory with the shepherds; the wise men journey with the star, for there is born for us an Infant Child, God Eternal Kontakion, Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord.

Rejoice, O Bethlehem, and make ready, O Ephrata! Behold the 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 arms of the Virgin Kontakion, preparation for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us proclaim the present mystery by which the separation has been broken and the flaming sword withheld: now shall the Cherubim let us all come to the tree of life. As for me, I am returning to the bliss of paradise from where I had been driven by original sin Vesper Hymn, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

Behold, the image of the Father and His immutable Eternity has taken the form of a servant! He has come down to us from a Mother all-pure and yet He has remain unchanged; He has remained true God as He was before, and has taken on Himself what He had not been, becoming Man out of his love for man. Wherefore, let us raise our voices in hymns singing: "O God, born of a Virgin, have mercy on us!" Vesper Hymn, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

Let all the earth worship and sing praise to You, sing praise to Your Name Prokimenon, Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

Did You Know That ...

...if wealth and posssessions are truly yours, why can't you take them with you to the next ...when you wish a miser a long life, you do not wish him well? ...great praise often grows out of great pain? ...fool-heartedness often spends lavishly what avarice wickedly collected. ...the easiest way to come to glory is to do for the sake of conscience what we do for glory? ... before you remark about another's sin, permit your own conscience to look within? ...to keep harmony in the chruch, keep in tune with Christ? ...God's love is to be enjoyed, not tested? ...eve: temptation is an opporutnity to say no to six and yes to God. ...poverty wants some things; luxury many things and envy all things? ...if you injure your conscience with sin, it will take revenge on you? ...they who wait on the Lord can bear the weight of adversity? ...train up a child in the way he should go and make sure you go that way yourself? ...the wonders of creation point to our wonderful Creator? ...it is foolish for us to do tomorrow what God asks us to do today? ...an honest man will receive neither money nor praise that is not his due? ...half the truth is often a great lie? ...a heart full of love has no room for envy?

The glorious Nativity in the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ

Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians 4: 4-7. Brethren: But when the fullness of time came, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." So that he is no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, an heir of God through Jesus Christ.

St. Mathew 2: 1 - 12. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, there came Magi from the east to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the new born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him." But when King Herod heard this, he was troubled and so was all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and Scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written through the prophet, 'And you, Bethlehem of the land of Judah, are by no means least among the princes of Judah, for from you shall come forth a leader who shall rule my people, Israel." Then Herod summoned the Magi secretly, and carefully ascertained from them the time when the star appeared to them. And sending them to Bethlehem, he said, "Go and make careful inquiry concerning the child and when you have found him, bring me word that I too may go and worship him." Now they, having heard the king, went their way. And behold, the star that they had seen in the east went before them until it came and stood over the place where the





child was. And when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly. And entering the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they worshipped him. And opening their treasures they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

Synaxis of the Birthgiver of God

Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews 2: 11 - 18. Brthren, For both he who sanctifies and they who are sanctified have one and the same Father. For which cause be it not ashamed to call them brethren saying, "I will announce your name to my brethren; I will sing your praise in the midst of the assembly; I will put my trust in him, and again, Here am I and the children God has given me!" Now, since the children are men of blood and flesh, Jesus likewise had a full share in ours, that by his death he might rob the devil, the prince of death, of his power and free those who through fear of death had been slaves their whole life long. Surely, he did not come to help angels, but rather the children of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God on their behalf, to expiate the sins of the people. Since he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are tempted.

St. Matthew 2: 12 - 23. But when the Magi departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying "Arise, and take the child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and remain there until I tell you. For Herod will seek the child to destroy him." So he arose and took the child and his mother by night and withdrew into Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod that there might be fulfilled what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying, "Out of Egypt I called my son. Then Herod, seeing that he had been tricked by the Magi, was exceedingly angry and he sent and slew all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the Magi. Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "A voice was heard in Rama, weeping and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children and she would not be comforted, because they are no more." But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, "Arise and take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." So he arose and took the child and his mother and went into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there and being warned in a dream he withdrew into the region of Galilee. And he went and settled in a town called Nazareth, that there might be fulfilled what was spoken through the prophets "He shall be called a Nazarene."



St. Stephen Protomartyr

Acts of the Apostles 6: 8: -15 and 7: 1 - 5, 47 - 60. In those days, the Stephen already spoken of was a man filled with grace and power, who worked great wonders and signs among the people. Certain members of the so-called "Synagogue of Roman Freedmen," that is, Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia, undertook to take Stephen in debate, but they proved no match for the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. They persuaded some men to make the charge that they heard him speaking blasphemies against Moses and God, and in this way they incited the people, the elders and the Scribes. All together they confronted him, seized him, and led him off to the Sanhedrin. There they brought in false witnesses who said, "This man never stops making statements against the holy place and the law. We have heard him claim that Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses handed down to us. The members of the Sanhedrin who sat there stared at him intently. Throughout, Stephen's face seemed like that of an angel. The high priests asked if the charges were true. To this Stephen replied "My brothers! Fathers! Listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia and before he settled in Haran. God said to him, leave your country and your kinfolk and go to the land I will show you. So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God made him move from there to this land where you now dwell. God did not give him any of it as his heritage, not even a foot of land, but he promised to give it to him and descendants after him as a possession - although he had no child.



It was Solomon, however, who constructed the building for that house. Yet the Most High does not dwell in buildings made by human hands, for the prophet says, "The heavens are my throne, the earth is my footstool; what kind of house can you build me?" asks the Lord. What is my resting place to be like? Did not my hand make all these things?" You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are always opposing the Holy Spirit just as your fathers did before you. Was there ever any prophet whom your fathers did not persecute? In their day, they put to death those who forefold the coming of the Just One; now you in your turn have become his betrayers and murderers. You who received the law through the ministry of angels have not served it." Those who listened to his words were stung to the heart; they ground their teeth in anger at him. Stephen, meanwhile, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked to the sky above and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand. "Look!" he exclaimed, "I see an opening in the sky and the Son of Man standing at God's right hand." The onlookers were shouting aloud, holding their hands over their ears as they did so. Then they rushed at him as one man, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. The witnesses meanwhile were piling their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. As Stephen was being stoned, he could be heard praying, "Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And with that he died.



St. Matthew 21: 33 -42. The Lord said, "Listen to another parable. There was a property owner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug out a vat, and erected a tower. Then he leased it out to tenant farmers and went on a journey. When vintage time arrived he dispatched his slaves to the tenants to obtain his share of the grapes. The tenants responded by seizing the slaves. They beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. A second time he dispatched even more slaves than before, but they treated them the same way. Finally, he sent his only son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' When they saw the son, the tenants said to one another, 'Here is the one who will inherit everything. Let us kill him and then we shall have his inheritance!' With that they seized him, dragged him outside the vineyard and killed him. What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do to those tenants when he comes?" They replied, "He will bring that wicked crowd to a bad end and lease his vineyard out to others who will see to it he has grapes at vintage time." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scripture, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the keystone of the structure. It is the Lord who did this and we find it marvelous to behold!"





AGRAND MYSTERY!
AWONDROUS SACRAMENT!
ANIMALS LOOK AT THE NEWBORN LORD
LYING IN THE CRIBBLESSED ARE YOU, OVIRGIN,
FOR YOUR WOMB WAS PRIVILEGED
TO BEAR CHRIST THE LORD!

Orthodoxy

LIVED

IS

HIGH PERFORMANCE

DELIVERED



The Angel's Announcement

Luke 2:8-20

hat night, shepherds guarded their sheep near Bethlehem. Suddenly, they were surrounded with light. An angel stood there. The shepherds were terrified. "Don't be afraid. I've come to give you good news. Today, in Bethlehem, Christ the Lord has been born. You'll find him wrapped in a blanket, sleeping in a feed trough."

Suddenly, the sky was filled with angels praising God. "Glory to God in heaven. On earth, peace and good will."

"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this wonderful thing."
And they did. There they found Mary, Joseph, and
Jesus, as the angels said.

Questions: Who did the angels say was born? What did the angels say when they praised God?

The Birth of Jesus Christ

Matthew 1:18-21; Luke 2:1-7

oseph was a carpenter in Nazareth. He was soon to be Mary's husband. One night he had a dream. In it an angel spoke: "Joseph, take Mary as your wife. The child in her is from the Holy Spirit. When he's born, call him Jesus. He'll save his people from their sins."

In those days Emperor Augustus Caesar commanded that his people be counted. To do this everyone went to their hometown. For Mary and Joseph, this was Bethlehem. Bethlehem was also King David's hometown.

It was a long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Mary, who was almost ready to have her baby, traveled with Joseph. They went down the hills in Galilee to the Jordan River. Then they followed the river to Judea. Up in the Judean hills they came to Bethlehem. The town was full of people who had come to be counted. An inn was there, but it was full of people.

Suddenly, Mary had to give birth. So they went into a stable. Here Mary had her child, Jesus. She wrapped him in a blanket and put him to sleep in a feed trough.

The Rising Star of Christ

Matthew 2:1-10

In the East, far from Bethlehem, lived some very wise men who studied the stars. They traveled to Jerusalem to ask one question: "Where is the child who's born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star rise in the sky. So we came to honor him."

When King Herod heard this, he was afraid he would lose his kingdom. "Call the chief priests and scribes," he ordered. "They'll know where the Christ is to be born."

The Jewish priests explained to Herod the prophet Micah's words:

Bethlehem in Judea is one of your littlest towns. But out of her will come the ruler of Israel.

Secretly Herod spoke to the wise men from the East: "When you've found the child, tell me. I want to honor him too."

When they had heard the king, the men set out. There, ahead of them, went the star they had seen rising. It stopped over a house in Bethlehem. The travelers were overcome by joy.

Questions: What were the men from the East looking for? How did the priests know where Jesus would be born?



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STAR	MESSIAH	GIFTS
	STABLE SHEPHERD MAGI STAR	STABLE NAZARETH SHEPHERD GOODWILL MAGI SAVIOR



Precious Gifts for Jesus

Matthew 2:11-14

he joyous men entered the house and saw the child with Mary. They knelt down with reverence. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered Jesus gifts. They gave him precious gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

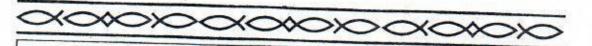
When the men left, they didn't return to Herod. In a dream, one of them had been warned not to do this. So

they traveled back to their land by another road.

Joseph saw an angel in a dream. "Hurry away to Egypt," the angel said. "Herod wants to kill the child."

That night the family left for Egypt.

Questions: What gifts did the men give Jesus? Why didn't they go back to Herod?





THE CAMEL



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CHRIST IS BORN X

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MARY NAZARETH SHEEP CHRIST JOSEPH BETHLEHEM COW INN MANGER BABY DONKEY GLORY SHEPHERD BIRTH STRAW MAGI KINGS ANGEL SAVIOR FIRSTBORN

XXXXX XXXXXX

Christ Is Hidden in Egypt

Matthew 2:15-23

rerod was angry when he saw he'd been tricked by the wise men. He ordered his solders to kill all the babies in Bethlehem. He wanted to be sure he killed the king of the Jews.

Hundreds of years before, Jeremiah said this would

happen:

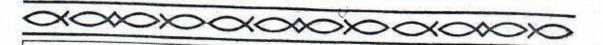
I hear a voice in Ramah, near Bethlehem. It is Rachel crying for her children. She won't be comforted because they are gone.

But Jesus was safe with his family in Egypt.

When Herod died, an angel came to Joseph in a dream. "Get up and go back to Israel," the angel said. "Those who want to kill the child are dead." Long before, a prophet had spoken of this: "Out of Egypt I've called my son," he wrote.

But the family didn't return to Judea. Herod's son was ruling there and Joseph was afraid. Again, he'd been warned in a dream. So Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Nazareth in Galilee. There they were safe. Another old prophet had seen this would happen. He said, "He will be called a Nazarene."

Questions: Why did Herod kill the children of Bethlehem? Why did Joseph go to live in Nazareth?



THE MANY NAMES OF JESUS

WYIRBVZTUDCRKLXDOD KREHCAETEHPORPDKF AEEOWDREHPEHSKESCU DDLLSVWANSKKZYLWC OEIYEOXHVRI GEMOUCQZYNOJO FMONQALAGRPB OENEMTROEQMRTSR BRHGGEFTGNBGUSE MVRAEKNQOZHSFL AMJKIECAEPFOE LHNNPSNYMCSUJPS BXGRBTSEKFNQQPYG ASABOTSERAODRI MATNQYSSMN HHFWKFVMRJZKOSI GKCQMVEAYHVADSCWXO J P R X G W N O S A C U N G Y E C F

CHRIST **JESUS**

CARPENTER MESSIAH

LAMB OF GOD

SHEPHERD

SON OF MAN

KING OF JEWS

PROPHET

TEACHER

FIRSTBORN SAVIOR

PRINCE OF PEACE KING OF KINGS

HOLY ONE

EMMANUEL

DELIVERER

ADVOCATE

NAZARENE

REDEEMER

In His Father's House

Luke 2:40-52

esus grew and became strong. He was full of wisdom

and God preferred him.

When Jesus was twelve years old, his family went to Jerusalem for the Passover. Afterwards, they started home, but the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. When they couldn't find him, they returned to Jerusalem. There they searched for Jesus.

After three days they found him in the temple. The teachers were amazed at his understanding and answers. When his parents saw him they were surprised. His mother said, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been looking for you. We've been

worried sick."

"Why were you searching for me?" Jesus asked her. "Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?" But they didn't understand his meaning.

Then Jesus went down with them from Jerusalem. They retuned to Nazareth and he obeyed them. His mother always remembered the things he did and said.

Jesus grew in wisdom and in years. He was preferred by God and the people.

Questions: Why did Jesus and his family go to Jerusalem? What was Jesus doing when they found him?

The Greatest Father of All

Sudoku puzzles are fun and challenging. Use the clues provided to complete this sudoku-style puzzle. Solve the puzzle below using the letters F.A. T.H. E. R. Each letter is used once per block and should be used once per row, both across and down. No letters may be repeated in each row or each block.

Hint: Find the row that spells out father.

6. Transfiguration 2. Parables 4. Last Supper E H F A Christ's Life in Pictures R E 9. Gethsemane 7. Crucifixion 5. Ascension F R F H E A A 4 H H 3 H T 3 H H A E H A H 1

REF

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4



Christ's Life in Pictures

You've learned a lot about lesus' life on earth. Use your Bible knowl edge and these rebus clues to help you make a timeline of some of the major events in the life of Christ.

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I W W C N J P E D P R R V G R E L R
M Q H U R I A E E M Q E O M E N L C
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Luke 2:8-9

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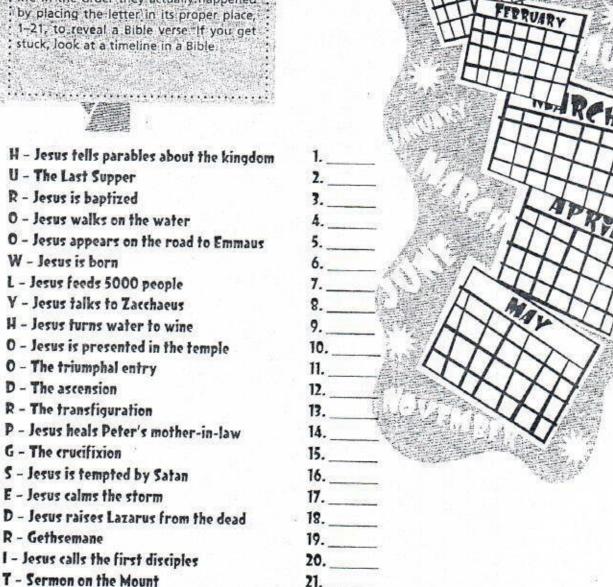
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WERE SORE

AFRAID.

When Did It Happen?

Put the following events from Jesus' life in the order they actually happened 1-21, to reveal a Bible verse "If you get



"Worship the Lord your God." Luke 4:8 When Did it Happen?

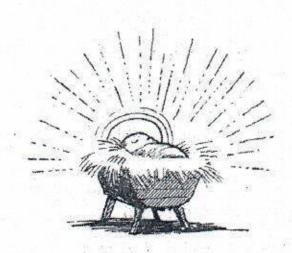
21.

___. Luke 4:8

Where is your emphasis?



Is this how you celebrate the Nativity of our Lord?



STAR OF THE SHOW

OLD TESTAMENT WORDS

In the letters below are twelve words found in the Old Testament. Unscramble the letters and write the words in the spaces given.

MATMEONSCM	DN LI	EMTEP
CETRABLEAN	P I	JRTTEM
FRACESCII	PI	HRA
RAALT		
SARPVOES	S	TINCKADELC
AMANN	s II	LEVESS
Vessels	Wanna	
Caudlestick	Passover	
lobi	Altar	
Нагр	zacyyce	
Inmpet	Tabernacle	
Iemple	Commandments	
Words	2	

THE MEANING OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

n one of the Church's services commemorating the Nativity of our Lord, we hear a certain refrain sung over and over again. It is: "God is with us!" This is the meaning of the word "Emmanuel." This expression provides us with a capsule definition of Christmas. The feastday of Christmas means that God Himself has come to earth to dwell among men. It means God has taken upon Himself human flesh and becomes man.

The origin of the exclamation "God is with us," or "Emmanuel" is a unique story. It was first used by the great Prophet Isaiah who lived some 750 years before the birth of Jesus. The Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament speaks eloquently about the forthcoming Saviour. In 7:14 we have this crystal clear prophecy: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel."

The greatest act of humility was made that night, nearly two thousand years ago, when the Eternal God, the Creator, came to earth in the form of a Babe. The One whom the heavens could not contain was wrapped in swaddling clothes, as a helpless newborn. Our Lord humbled Himself and became man.

But of course it is not enough for us to simply proclaim "God is with us!" We must act upon it. This simple act must color our life - our every breath, our every day, and every encounter. Let the spirit of Christmas - the spirit of humility, love, kindness & faith sink deeply into our souls during this sacred season, and then let it linger there always. Let it be clear to one and all that God is with us and we rejoice in that reality.

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