

The Faithful Servant

Winter, 2024/25

A newsletter of St. Catherine Orthodox Church, Hagerstown, Maryland

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

CHRIST IS BAPTIZED IN THE JORDAN!

ON THE INCARNATION, from Fathers Ancient and Modern

The divine Son of God was born in human flesh for the salvation of the world. This is the central doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Faith; the entire life of Christians is built upon this fact.

The Symbol of Faith [i.e., the Nicene Creed] stresses that it is “for us men and for our salvation” that the Son of God has come. This is the most critical biblical doctrine, that “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16...).

Because of His perfect love, God sent forth His Son into the world. God knew that in the very act of creation that to have a world at all would require the incarnation of His Son in human flesh... “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as the only-begotten Son of the Father. And from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.” (John 1:14-16)...

The divine Son of God was born as a man from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1; Luke 1). The Church teaches that the virgin birth is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 7:14), and that it is the fulfillment of the longings of all...for salvation which [is] found in all religions and philosophies in human history. Only God can save the world,. Man alone cannot do it because it is man himself who needs to be saved.

Jesus is born from the Virgin Mary because He is the divine Son of God, the Savior of the world. It is the formal teaching of the Orthodox Church that Jesus is not a “mere man” like all other men. He is indeed a real man, a whole and perfectly complete man with a human mind, soul and body. But He is the man which the Son and Word of God has become...

Jesus of Nazareth is God, or, more accurately, the divine Son of God in human flesh. He is a true man in every way. He was born. He grew up in obedience to His parents. He increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:51-52)...As a man, Jesus

experienced all normal and natural human experiences such as growth and development, ignorance and learning, hunger, thirst, fatigue, sorrow, pain and disappointment. He also knew human temptation, suffering and death. He took these things upon Himself "for us men and for our salvation" ... "Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect...to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted." (Heb. 2:9-18)...

Christ has entered the world becoming like all...in all things except sin. "He committed no sin; no guile was found on His lips..." (Isaiah 53:9; I Peter 2:22)...Jesus was tempted but He did not sin. He was perfect in every way, absolutely obedient to God the Father; speaking His words, doing His works, and accomplishing His will. As a man, Jesus fulfilled His role perfectly as the Perfect Man, the new and final Adam. He did all things that [we] fail to do, being in everything the most perfect human response to the divine initiative of God toward creation.

From +Fr. Thomas Hopko, **The Orthodox Faith, v. 1 – Doctrine and Scripture**

There is one God, who by his Word and Wisdom made and ordered all things...His Word is our Lord, Jesus Christ who in these last times became man among men, that he might unite the end with the beginning, that is, man with God. Therefore the prophets who received from this same Word their prophetic gift, proclaimed his advent in the flesh, by which was effected the mingling and uniting of God and man according to the Father's pleasure. For the Word of God foretold from the beginning that God would be seen by men and would live with them on earth and converse with them; that he would be present with his creatures to bring salvation to them and to be perceived by them; that he would free us "from the hands of those who hate us," that is, from the whole spirit of transgression; and would make us 'serve him all our days in holiness and righteousness;' that man, taking to himself the Spirit of God, should pass to the glory of the Father...Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, of his boundless love, became what we are that he might make us what he himself is.

--St. Irenaeus of Lyons, from **Against Heresies**

[on Philippians 2:9--"God highly exalted him"]

"Highly exalted" does not signify the exaltation of the substance of the Word; that was and is always equal with God. The exaltation is of the humanity. It is said 'after' the incarnation of the Word, to make it clear that "humbled" and "exalted" refer to the human nature...The Word, being the image of the Father, and immortal, "took the form of a servant," and as man endured death for our sake in his own flesh, that thus he might offer himself to the Father on our behalf; therefore also as man he is said to be highly exalted because of us and on our behalf, that as by his death we all died in Christ, so also in Christ we may all be exalted.

--St. Athanasios, **Against the Arians**

He was always God...Later he became man for our sakes, and, as the Apostle [Paul, Colossians 2:9] says, "the godhead dwelt" in the flesh "in bodily fashion." This is as much as to say, "Though he was God he had a body for his own, and using it as an instrument he had become man for our sakes." Thus it is that the properties of the flesh are said to be his since he was in the flesh; hunger, thirst, pain, weariness and the like, to which the flesh is liable, while the works belonging to the Word Himself (raising the dead, restoring sight to the blind, curing the woman's hemorrhage), he himself did through his own body. The Word "bore the weakness" [Isaiah 53:4] of the flesh as his own; for the flesh was his flesh. The flesh assisted the works of the godhead, for the godhead was in the flesh; the body was God's.

--St. Athanasios, **On the Incarnation**

Every manifestation of Jesus Christ, both in history and in the inner life of each person, is simultaneously a manifestation of humility and of glory. Whoever tries to separate these two aspects of Christ commits an error which falsifies the whole spiritual life. I cannot approach the glorified Christ without, at the same time, approaching the humiliated Christ, nor the humiliated Christ without approaching the glorified Christ. If I desire Christ to be manifested in me, this cannot come about except through embracing Him Whom Augustine delighted to call "Christus humilis" (the lowly or humble Christ), and, in the same upsurge, worshiping Him Who is also God and King. --"A Monk of the Eastern Church" (Fr. Lev Gillet), from **The Year of Grace of the Lord**

THE REASONS FOR THE SEASON

At this time of year, the population at large searches for the "true meaning of Christmas," what all the hubbub is truly about, wherein do we find the true joy to which we are encouraged to enter at every turn, mostly by some commercial interest or other. I do apologize to our "old-timers" for bringing up once again a couple quotes I always mention at this time of year (and undoubtedly will yet again this year), but that seem to me to place before us how we are to approach this blessed season. One quote is from Scripture, the other from our festal hymns:

"...the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in the world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we may be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

(Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7, the epistle reading for Liturgy on the feast of Theophany [Epiphany], January 6)

"Today the Virgin gives birth to the transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable One. Angels with shepherds glorify Him; the wise men journey with the start, since **for our sake the Eternal God was born as a little Child.**
(Kontakion for the Nativity of Christ; emphasis mine--DB)

ST. BASIL'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Anyone who has been at St. Catherine's for a while knows of my admiration for St. Basil the Great. Theologian, monastic founder, liturgist, canonist, pastor, scholar, caretaker of the needy--what is there in the life of the Church that he did not do, other than undergo marriage or martyrdom? I can't think of much. In my estimation, St. Basil was the comprehensive "Man of the Church," given to serving the Body of Christ with his vast talents in whatever situation he encountered.

We have the opportunity to celebrate this great Church Father on his feast day, January 1, New Year's Day, also the feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ. A couple years ago, in 2023, New Year's fell on a Monday and New Year's Eve was the 5th Sunday of the month, which we gave over to holding a program of some sort as we usually do. After a luncheon, we showed two videos, an excellent presentation of the life of St. Basil by a group of priests and another on both the history and the making of the Vasilopita--Basil's Bread, which involved a story of his care for the needy in his city. Along with the background of that pious custom, I also learned of another title we could add to the list of his accomplishments above: penitent. Of this, I was not aware, nor that he was brought to it at the urging of his sister, Macrina, one of our great woman saints of whom we need to know more! After a well-attended Liturgy the next day, we blessed a Vasilopita, but no one found the hidden coin! It remained unfound, but this year we already have someone enlisted to supply the "Basil's Bread" and we shall see who receives that blessing.

In searching for those videos for our program, I ran into another which I thought would be useful for a winter newsletter. Included was entitled as you see above--his "New Year's Resolutions," ethical advice fitting for just the occasion of his feast at the onset of a new calendar year. So, for 2024, I offer you this list of considerations "against which there is no law" (Galatians 5:23) from this great saint:

"Let your demeanor, your dress, your walking, your sitting down, the nature of your food, the quality of your being, your house and what it contains, aim at simplicity. Let your speech, your singing, your manner with your neighbor, let these things also be in accord with humility rather than with vanity. In your words let there be no empty

pretense, in your singing no excess sweetness, in conversation be not ponderous nor overbearing. In everything, refrain from seeking to appear important. Be a comfort to your friends, kind to the ones with whom you live...patient with those who are troublesome, loving towards the lowly, comforting those in trouble, never despising anyone, gracious in friendship, cheerful in answering others, courteous and approachable to everyone, never speaking your own praises nor getting others to speak of them, never taking part in unbecoming conversations..."

ON THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATERS AT THEOPHANY AND THE BLESSING OF HOMES

"Let it be known to all concerning the Holy Water that those who deprive themselves of partaking of [it] are not doing a good thing, for the grace of God was given for the sanctification of the world and all creation. Therefore it is sprinkled in all places and even over common and profane things. And so, what is the reason not to drink of this? (But know that uncleanness in us is not from partaking of things that are eaten, but from our filthy deeds. If we are cleansed of these deeds, without doubt we may truly drink of this Holy Water).

"About this, the rational swallow, the golden-voiced Ecumenical Teacher, John, Patriarch of Constantinople, in his sermon for those Christians who had come to the Holy Church of God for baptism...witnesses...saying: 'Why not on the day in which [Christ] was born, but on the day in which He was baptized is the appearance spoken of? Because this is the day on which He was baptized and sanctified the nature of water.'

"For this reason, on the Eve of the Feast, all draw and carry water to their homes and keep it and preserve it throughout the whole year. The day of sanctifying the waters becomes a clear sign [of God's grace], for the nature of these waters is not spoiled for a long time, but it endures for a whole year, or two, or three, or many years. Today the waters that are drawn remain fresh and new and after an extended time is as on the day in which it was drawn."

(from the Festal Menaion, as quoted in **Liturgical Calendar and Rubrics** of the Orthodox Church in America for 1998, including all editing, punctuation, etc.)

THAT TIME AGAIN

The annual parish meeting of St. Catherine Orthodox Church will take place Sunday, January 19, following Liturgy and a covered-dish luncheon. Included in the meeting will be parish council elections, reports and budgeting. There is still time to submit by-law changes to be considered this year. We ask all parishioners to attend and take part as we review the past year and plan for 2025.

To be eligible to vote, one must be Orthodox (i.e., communicant, at least in the past year), adult (18 and over), active in the life of St. Catherine's for at least 6 months (which may include time in catechumenate) and demonstrably contributing to the financial support of the parish. To run for parish council, being involved in the life of the parish for a year; for president, vice-president or treasurer, 21 years old and over and involved with the life of the parish 2 years. Worth mentioning is that **being "active in the life of St. Catherine's" means primarily being present and involved in the worship life of the parish.** One can't consider oneself a member of St. Catherine's, and certainly not a "counselor" of the community if one doesn't gather together with the community in its worship, the primary reason we come together to begin with.

A Closely Related Subject...

"Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of Hosts...My Spirit abides among you; do not fear. For thus says the Lord of Hosts...I will fill this house with splendor...The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of Hosts, and in this place I will give prosperity." (Haggai 2:3, 4, 7, 9)

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21)

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" (Mathew 25:23)

A Stewardship Bible Study:

When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian Exile, seeing the city in ruins (see II/IV Kings 25 & II Chronicles 36), they began to rebuild, with special emphasis on the Temple of Solomon, which had been destroyed in the fall of the city. The rebuilding of the Temple began with great enthusiasm (Ezra 3). In time, though, that enthusiasm slackened, in part because of opposition from neighboring peoples to the restoration of the Jewish Temple, in part because of the people's own negligence. The Prophet Haggai points out that the people have been much more concerned with elaborate furnishings of their own homes than they are with providing for the House of God, and there have been consequences (Haggai 1:2-11). From the warnings given by the prophet, "...the people feared before the Lord" (1:12), work began, and God sent a word of comfort and encouragement via Haggai (1:13-14).

Yet the rebuilt Temple that was built paled in comparison to the first built by Solomon. God Himself sees this (2:3), but encourages the people further: "Yet now take

courage...all you people of the land' says the Lord...work, for I am with you, says the Lord of Hosts...My Spirit abides among you; fear not" (2:4). With the work faithfully undertaken and completed, the Presence of God in all Its splendor fills the the Temple, which in the glory of the Lord, appears "greater than the former."

The lesson for us: do what is required for the "house of God!" Work faithfully, and, however humble the results may have to be, God Himself "will fill this house with splendor...and in this place I will give prosperity..." (2:7, 9). It is in this spirit that we approach you for your support for 2025, asking that you contribute, not just of your "treasures" but also of your "time and talents." If we do so faithfully, God's blessings will remain with us, as they have in the past in the face of great challenges, and we can be assured that "The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former" (Haggai 2:9).

Below is a copy of the pledge form, also available in church. Pick one up there or even just detach and fill this out, **prayerfully** considering what you can and should contribute to the week-by-week operation of St. Catherine's, not to include candle money or special appeals and donations. Return it to us in person at church, in a collection box or tray or through the mail. A good number have responded already. Many thanks, and God bless you for your generosity and faithfulness, both now and to come!

Stewardship Pledge Form

Thanks be to God for all of the ways He blesses us!

I/We pledge the following amount/s for the year 2025, to
St. Catherine Orthodox Church, Hagerstown, Maryland

\$ _____ Weekly x 52 = \$ _____ per year

\$ _____ Monthly x 12 = \$ _____ per year

\$ _____ Annually (lump sum)

_____ Please include me/us on the roster of supporting members of St. Catherine Orthodox Church

Sign X _____ X _____ X _____

Print

X _____

May God bless you for your faithfulness!

(flip side):

What you should know about your pledge of support:

It is confidential. Only the priest and Treasurer have access to pledge information (for record keeping purposes).

It is urgent. The only source of support for your church is the generosity of the individuals who worship here. We receive no outside financial assistance.

It is an act of faith. Offering the first portion of your blessings to God is an expression of thanks and praise. It's also an expression of trust in God that He will honor His promises.

It is appreciated!!

NEWS AND NOTES

Feast day services schedules are as follows:

Tuesday, December 24, 10 AM--Vespers with Divine Liturgy of St. Basil; 7:30 PM--Vigil of the Nativity (Vespers and Matins)

Wednesday, December 25, 10 AM--Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of Christ (no fasting until January 5)

Wednesday, January 1, 10 AM--Divine Liturgy of St. Basil for the Circumcision of Christ and for St. Basil

Sunday, January 5, 10 AM--Divine Liturgy; 1 PM, Vespers with the Great Blessing of Waters

Monday, January 6, 10 AM--Divine Liturgy for Theophany followed by the Great Blessing of Waters

House blessings are available from the first Blessing of Waters Sunday, 1/5. Contact Fr. Dennis to schedule.

At a parish Council meeting a couple months ago, it was decided to lift the restrictions on the method of receiving Holy Communion, which were in place since the COVID pandemic. At the time we were following the directions given by the Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, as well as those for our diocese by our bishop, Metropolitan Tikhon. We have held onto those for a while but Council figured it was time to ease up on those practices. So henceforth we will go by the following in

receiving Communion: 1) you may receive in whatever manner you have in the past--if you are accustomed to taking the spoon in your mouth (the "cough medicine" method), fine, if by tilting you head back so that the priest may drop the Sacrament in your mouth (the "dump truck" method, as was directed by one or another Orthodox synod even before COVID), also fine; 2) we will still have paper towels for you to clean your lips off, but this is now optional; you may again do so with the Communion cloth; 3) we have been discouraging the veneration of the Cup after receiving, but you may do so again if it is your practice and preference--and we are aware that in some places people are explicitly directed to do so and in some places exactly the opposite; 4) as always, however you do receive the Precious Body and Blood of the Lord, **OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE!** Don't sip through pursed lips--it is not hot soup! Don't use your teeth as a rake--it is not a pile of leaves! There is nothing any more pious about those practices which only involve opening your mouth only as far as you do to breath lightly--God Himself made your mouth and it's OK to use it!

The first Sunday of each month is given to our an adult religious education program, presently a discussion on questions posed on the OCA website concerning parish life to be compiled in preparation for the All-American Council of the OCA in July of 2025 in Phoenix, Arizona. We have had, as of this writing, 3 such sessions and they have been lively, thoughtful and productive. You are welcome to join in any time; each discussion is not dependent upon what was discussed previously. And, FYI, the 5th Sunday, which we have in December, is given over to a special program--as we refer to it, a "Speaker Sunday." The one for this month is yet in the works.

We have needed to begin a second section of instruction classes in the Orthodox faith as among our many newcomers are those seeking to learn about the Orthodox Church with a view towards uniting themselves to it. One group already in progress had gone along too far in the program for anyone to join; meanwhile, we continued to attract more "seekers," and so a second group has gotten underway. It's still early enough in their deliberations for others to join in. The two classes meet on alternate Saturdays at 4:30 until about 6 when it is time to prepare for Vespers; if there's to be a Panikhida (memorial service) at 6, we finish around 5:30.

If you have not seen this already, please take note of the "Serenity Garden" planted in the flower bed on the uphill (east) side of the church, just before you get to the side door. Space has been cleared away where there is now two attractive stone benches and a kiosk containing an icon of Christ as Celebrant of the Eucharist--offering, as it were His Body and Blood--which, as you know, is what goes on inside the building! I do not know exactly who all worked on this, but it is most attractive, and I hope our people are making use of it. Please note, though, that it is open for anyone who passes by to glean that "serenity" from being before the icon of Christ the Celebrant. We look forward to it being blessed the next time our bishop, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, is able to visit the parish. Many thanks to those who did put the time and effort into this; it may

have been a Brotherhood project, but I believe the bulk of the design and labor came from Oleg Salcutan.

In past years, we have sent several late-high-school-aged kids to either Boston or Chicago for the Crossroads program, sponsored by Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary. They would come back raving about their experience with other Orthodox youth taking part in educational, social and charitable activities for a week in the summer. One again, that program is available to high school juniors and seniors. It appears as though the Crossroads program is now its own entity, the Crossroads Institute. I do not know how deep the connection with Holy Cross or the Greek Archdiocese runs, but I can vouch for the effect it has had on the teens from St. Catherine's. There is a letter from our former parishioner Pasha Heatwole relating how moved he was by the experience. Find out more at www.crossroadsinstitute.org. And, by the way, there may be scholarship money available from the parish to assist you getting there--feel free to ask Fr. Dennis or a parish council member.

FROM OUR BISHOP:

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,
My Beloved Children in the Lord,

Christ is born! Glorify him!

Let the heavenly fires burn silently and let them fearfully gaze upon a humble corner of the universe, upon the black earth, and upon the most precious part of that corner – the grotto that is giving birth to God.

– St. Nikolai Velimirovic, Prayers by the Lake 49

Today is the bright and wonderful, yet secret and humble, culmination of a season spent in hidden anticipation. Unlike Great Lent, when we blow the trumpets to announce a fast (Joel 2:15), the forty days of the Nativity Fast are spent quietly, in the darkness of night – the same night by which the shepherds once kept watch over their flocks (Lk. 2:8). In this darkness, the darkness of the shadow of the Law (Heb. 10:1), we kept company with the holy prophets – Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Daniel, and the Three Holy Children. We heard the first strains of song celebrating Christ's Nativity on November 21, as the *katavasiae* at the canon. On St. Andrew's Day, St. Nicholas Day, here and there, a hymn sang of the one who is to come. Our expectation mounted during the forefeast, and crescendoed with the Vespertal Liturgy and Vigil of Christmas Eve.

Now, upon us who sat for those forty days in great darkness, an even greater Light has shone forth (Is. 9:2). Our Hope has come; our Expectation has arrived.

The one whom we awaited in the dark and silence is now manifest to us in the same dark and silence – the dark and cold of midnight, in the black and moonless night of our sin, in the deep cleft of the cave, contained in the trough of the manger. But, despite the darkness pressing all around, he shines, a clear and pure and innocent Light. Despite the pressing silence, his very presence, his very identity, is that of Word, the Word, the Word that was in the beginning (Jn. 1:1).

He is the Light shining on us from the Father; he is the Father's Word to the human race. He is the fulfillment, source, and sustenance of all our hopes. His light is the light of purity, of unearthly and all-giving love. His word is a word of peace – not a duplicitous, hypocritical, self-serving peace full of false comfort such as the world gives (Jn. 14:27), but true peace, peace with God, the peace of the Cross. And his hope, unthinkable to the earthly-minded, is the hope of unending life that is not like this life: it is a life fully given to the Other, fully given to God, a life unconcerned with passing pleasures and fading achievements, but solely with self-giving communion and self-emptying love.

The birth of this holy Infant, our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, the Light and Word and Peace of God, takes place not only in a cave of stone: it also takes place in the soul of every one of the elect. To become worthy dwelling-places for this hidden light, we have spent forty days in preparation, and today, Christ is born unto us; unto us a Child is given (Is. 9:6). And, in him, all our hopes are fulfilled. The One born of the Virgin speaks to us in one of St. Nikolai Velimirovic's *Prayers by the Lake*:

I am thy tomorrow, from today until the end of time. Everything good that thou hast been expecting from the days of tomorrow is within me. Today, thy tomorrow is fulfilled in me. And no day, from now until the last day, will bring thee what I am bringing thee. Lo, I am the day that has no beginning and no end.

I am the treasury of every future that exists and I am the way to that treasury. The future in its entirety cannot give thee so much as a kernel of good, unless it borrows from me.

Thus, with his Nativity – in Bethlehem and in the heart – Christ is with us, bringing every good, every blessing, with him.

But, in another sense, we are still waiting: our entire life is a period of Advent, a period of watching for the coming of Christ. If he is born in a hidden way in our soul in this age, nevertheless we await the full and definitive revelation of his unimaginable splendor in the age to come, when the elect will be revealed as shining vessels of his presence forever. Thus, our whole life is a period of joyful waiting, expecting the fullness of the Joy which we already know in part.

“Hopelessness sits idle. But my hope cleans and washes continually; it airs out and censes the quarters where it will receive thee,” says St. Nikolai in another of his prayers. And the greatest expression of this expectation of ours is precisely prayer itself. Again, as St. Nikolai says: “Prayer is necessary for me lest I lose sight of the salvation-bearing star, but the star does not need it to keep from losing me.” Moreover, prayer is not

merely an expression of expectation, of longing, of hope: it is also the path to fulfilling those expectations. The more we pray, the more we open ourselves up to the action of the divine energies, to communion with the Divinity, the more our expectations are fulfilled, even in this life.

Therefore, as we celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, let us gather in spirit before his crib and pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, who art everywhere present and fillest all things, come and make thy presence known in us.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, born of the Virgin for our salvation, come and be born anew in our heart.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, born in our heart through thy holy Mysteries, come and dwell with us forever.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Child given unto thy faithful, who art with thy Church always, even unto the end of the age, make us to be worthy dwelling-places for thee in the endless ages to come, when thou, together with thy Father and thine All-Holy Spirit, shalt abide in thine elect as Light and Peace unto the ages of ages. Amen.

With my blessing and prayers for all of you on this most joyous feast,

Sincerely yours in the newborn Christ,

+ Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

**A BLESSED NATIVITY, JOYOUS NEW YEAR AND GLORIOUS THEOPHANY TO
ALL**