

# ***THE FAITHFUL SERVANT***

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January, 2021

**CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!**

**CHRIST IS BAPTIZED IN THE JORDAN!**

## **ON HOLY THEOPHANY**

The voice of the Lord upon the waters cries out saying: “Come, receive the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, the Spirit of Christ Who is made manifest.” (from the Great Blessing of Waters)

Thus says the Lord: The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad...and the desert shall rejoice and bloom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing...they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God...He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water... (Isaiah 35:1-10, from the Great Blessing of Waters)

I also recommend to you, as I do almost every year, the epistle reading at the Divine Liturgy for Theophany, Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7, which, to me, sums up for us the meaning of the coming of Our Lord in the flesh and the beginning of His work in the world. I will, of course, send that to you before the feast as I do with the Sunday readings each week.

## **STUDIES...**

Most of you know that I have been offering a Bible study presentation on the parish’s Facebook page on Friday evenings at 8 PM. This has been one opportunity to offer a parish activity in the midst of our reduced parish life due to the ongoing pandemic. While few watch while I’m “on the air” on Fridays, more seem to check it out in the following week. I certainly enjoy doing it, I’ve learned quite a bit myself and I think it has been a worthwhile exercise for those who have decided to look in.

I began with reflections on the Psalms, as I had been moved by my experiences using them during my hospitalization and beyond. In years past, I had led a study on the Psalms based on the various genres found in the book—“form criticism” as they call it in some circles. We finished that topic right around the beginning of December, and it only took a brief look at the calendar for me to decide what to do next. I’ve often mentioned my fondness for the so-called “minor prophets” of the Old Testament, and a good number of them are commemorated on our calendar during the Nativity Fast (Obadiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk) with a couple more

between Christmas and Theophany (Malachi, Micah). It seemed to be a good opportunity to go over those particular books in Scripture.

A few things from each study stand out for me as we come to the new year this time around. I've sent out Psalm 84/85 to you before, around the Paschal season when I was sending Psalms out to you at least weekly. It seems to me to be a prayer for "restoration," an idea we need to have before us as 2021 begins and proceeds. And how shall we proceed once our society, not to mention our life in the Church, is restored? A brief quote from Micah gives us a good starting point for appropriate resolutions for this particular new year! FYI—the translation of the Psalm is from **The Ancient Faith Psalter**, which I used largely in that study; the Micah quote is from **The New American Bible**, to which I often refer in the current study.

### **Restoration: Psalm 84/85**

You have shown favor to Your land, O Lord, You have brought back the captives of Jacob.

You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You pardoned all their sin.

You withdrew all Your wrath; You turned from Your hot anger.

Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away Your righteous indignation towards us.

Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?

O God, You will return and give us life, and Your people will rejoice in You.

Show us Your mercy, O Lord, and grant us Your salvation

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people, to His saints, to those who turn to Him in their hearts.

Surely His salvation is at hand for those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth arose from the earth, and righteousness looked down from the sky.

Yes, the Lord will pour out His sweet goodness, and our land will yield its fruit.

Righteousness will go before Him, and its footsteps shall open the way.

### **Resolution: Micah 6:8**

You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

We also offer our prayers and sympathies to Lena Brown and her family at the falling asleep in the Lord of her father, Victor Pavlenko, in the week before Christmas. At the funeral, Fr. Dennis commented on how Victor could be a man of many surprises; for example, his prowess at both

chess and the guitar, and especially his willingness to resort to any means to get to church on Sunday—even walking from Martinsburg to Hagerstown! It seemed a fitting meditation at this time of the year, where God shows Himself to be full of surprises; as He says through the Prophets, “I will do something that has never been seen before!” which we see in the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ! May our Incarnate Lord keep His servant Victor in His eternal memory!

We call to your attention the message from the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, **We Rejoice Even in Tribulation: An Encyclical of Hope**, posted on the OCA’s website: [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org), in response to what we all face with the spread of the COVID virus. We are grateful for the bishops’ words of encouragement in the midst of a most discouraging continuing situation, and for their guidance in looking to our faith in Our Lord, Jesus Christ, as our source of hope and even opportunity in these days. It is not short—no one-or-two-page letter here; more a small volume—but worth contemplating for a source of direction in these times.

Once again, many thanks to Alec Davidson for his assistance with the calendar. And God grant many years to the whole family—Alec, Jessica and big brother William—on the birth of Phoebe in December. We look forward to seeing all again soon and especially meeting little Phoebe.

Also, congratulations to Gheorghe and Irina Goian and their son, Oliver, on his baptism last month. Many years in God’s love and service to Oliver, as well as his parents and godparents.

Our annual parish meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 24. This will need to take place virtually via a ZOOM meeting. Parish council meets Sunday, January 10, at which time details of the format will be worked out and you will be informed. Along with reviewing the past year in reports, we will elect parish council and attempt to pass a budget for the coming year. Those Orthodox adults (over 18) who regularly contribute to the support of the parish and have been a part of our parish life for at least a year are qualified to vote and run for council; for president, VP or treasurer, 21 years old and involved in parish life here 2 years. Plan to join with us to chart our course, with God’s help, for 2021.

Pledge forms for 2021 have been sent out to you via emails. We ask that you prayerfully consider what you can and should contribute towards the support of the parish for the year, fill in the amount and indicate the mode of payment, sign and return it to church on line, in the mail or in person. To facilitate that, here is the form again:

In thanksgiving for all God has done for me/us and towards the support of His Holy Church, I/we pledge the following to St. Catherine Orthodox Church for calendar year 2021:

\_\_\_\_\_ /week x 52= \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ /month x 12 = \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ /lump sum or other= \_\_\_\_\_

Adults to sign: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

