

# *Your* DIOCESE *Alive*

OFFICIAL INFORMATION SERVICE

Diocese of Philadelphia & Eastern Pennsylvania, Orthodox Church in America

*Who are they?*

*What's coming down  
from Heaven?*

*Why the animals?*

*Why is the Child  
wrapped?*

*Why does Joseph  
look so troubled?*



*What are they  
doing?*

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# A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



The Right Reverend  
HERMAN  
Bishop of Philadelphia

Orthodox Church in America

## DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

P.O. Box 11 • South Canaan, PA 18459 • 937-4686

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

The Feast of the Nativity of Christ is upon us, filling the whole universe with joy. "All the angels in heaven are of good cheer and greatly rejoice today. The whole creation leaps with joy, for the Saviour and Lord is born in Bethlehem. Every error of idolatry has ceased, and Christ reigns unto all ages" (a sticheron at the Liturgy).

In the Nativity of Christ, the great and holy event which the Holy Orthodox Church celebrates this day, those in Heaven and men on earth were shown the Divine Wisdom and the perfect love for the human race, pre-ordained from time immemorial and fulfilled through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who for us men, and for our salvation descended from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

The descent unto earth of the promised Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, is a source for us of the true knowledge of God. Humanity, enslaved by Original Sin, was returned to its original state, and man became worthy to take part in this adoption and in immortality, and was granted the possibility of full communion with God.

At this solemn Christmastide our Holy Orthodox Church touches our very hearts and with the power of grace fills us with a bright and spiritual joy through the divinely inspired and exalted hymns which we sing to the honor and glory of our Lord, born this day. On this joyful day let us join with one mouth and one heart in praise of the great mystery of godliness, God Who was manifest in the flesh; and let us with all our heart offer up to the Divine Infant the pious murmur of our heartfelt prayer of love and gratitude: "for unto us is born a young Child, the Pre-Eternal God".

We greet you all, our Beloved Children, with the joy of this Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. May God bless the efforts of each one of us in the work to which we are called, so that by laboring with care and love we should attain a new level of usefulness and creativity for the glory of His Holy Orthodox Church in America.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

*+ Herman*  
+HERMAN,  
Bishop of Philadelphia  
and Eastern Pennsylvania

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• Father Daniel Kovalak

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# AN ENCOUNTER ...COOKIES & ASTRONOMY

## Of Note



Northeast Pennsylvania's only free-standing psychiatric facility was opened with ribbon-cutting ceremonies and a luncheon, November 18th in Wilkes Barre. Bishop Herman, a member of the Advisory Board, spoke at the luncheon.



Dignitaries at the Grand Opening of the Wyoming Valley Clinic included (from left) Mrs. Jean Barney, Vice President for Clinical Affairs and one of the faithful of our Diocese; Doctor Bertran S. Brown, Bishop Herman, and Mr. James H. Lawler, President of the new facility.

### ORTHODOX COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

His Grace, Bishop Herman, delivered an address at the Grand Opening of the Wyoming Valley Clinic, a mental health care facility in Wilkes Barre. Bishop Herman serves on the Advisory Board of the clinic, which is the only free-standing psychiatric facility in Northeast Pennsylvania.

The remarks were presented at a luncheon, November 18th, attended by some 300 persons, including Mrs. Jean Barney, a member of Saint John the Baptist parish, Nanticoke. Mrs. Barney is Vice President for Clinical Affairs at the new facility. Also in attendance were Fathers Vladimir Petarak, John Kuchta, Robert Kondratik and Daniel Kovalak of our Diocese, former Congressman Daniel Flood, and Doctor Bertran S. Brown, President of Hahnemann Medical College, Philadelphia.

Bishop Herman's remarks centered on the cooperation of the Church and society in the alleviation of human suffering. Some 7-million Americans received mental health care in 1982.



Bishop Herman visited with former Pennsylvania Congressman Daniel Flood at the luncheon.





### MUSIC TO ASTRONOMY

**OLYPHANT**—All Saints Church's adult discussion series continued November 15th, with a fascinating presentation on church music by Father Theodore Heckman, who enjoyed some good discussion on the subject after his talk.

The series continues on December 6th with a panel discussion featuring Fathers Michael Evans and David Lisko plus two lay seminary graduates.

Doctor Larry Sherman, professor of chemistry at the University of Scranton, will present a novel look at the date of Christmas as reckoned by astronomical means on December 10th.

All Saints' pastor, Father David Lisko, has details at (717) 489-0942.

\*\*\*\*\*



### FLORIDA BOUND

**SIMPSON**—Long-time parishoners of Saint Basil Church, Mary Burke and Olga Barnes (both nee Holowatch), bid farwell to president Michael Mikulak, Father Michael Evans, and other parishoners during the post-Litury coffee hour, Sunday, November 20th, having opted for the sunnier climes of Florida. They will be missed!

\*\*\*\*\*

## ENCOUNTER OF AN ORTHODOX KIND

It's fellowship, fun and education for all who attend the Annual Winter Encounter. Sponsored by the Diocesan Department of Youth, this year's encounter will be held at Saint Tikhon's Seminary, December 28th to the 31st. Worship, an inspiring talk, a movie, ice skating, hiking, a bonfire, singing, roller skating, basketball, volleyball, and much more are all on the agenda. Above all, it's Orthodox fellowship for young people. The cost is \$30. Please contact your pastor for registration information.

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## FR. JOHN'S CLAM SAUCE

Here's a delicious recipe the lenten cookbooks missed. It comes from Protodeacon John Udics, who has thoroughly tested it, with grateful friends, on numerous occasions.

- 4 large onions, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced (or garlic powder to taste)
- 4 green peppers, chopped
- 4 stalks celery, chopped (optional)
- 1 8 oz. can chopped or minced clams
- 1 cup white wine
- 2 8 oz. cans large pitted olives; drained; chopped or broken
- 2 8 oz. cans mushrooms, drained
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- vermicelli or spaghetti
- butter
- pepper
- cooking oil
- Italian seasonings
- salt
- dill (optional)

Saute onions, garlic, peppers and celery in butter and/or oil. In large sauce pan, combine sauted vegetables, clams (with juice), and wine. Season to taste. Simmer 15 min. and add olives. After 15 min. more, add mushrooms. Then simmer 15 min., add soups and heat thoroughly (do not boil). Serve over cooked spaghetti. (Serves 4-6)

For a strictly lenten dish, use cooking oil or margarine, omit wine and cream of mushroom soup (contains whey). Instead, use tomato soup alone, or omit both soups and thicken with flour.



It's all smiles and fellowship (and much more) as another Winter Encounter for Orthodox youth gets under way at Saint Tikhon's, December 28th through the 31st.

## COALDALE COOKIES

Coaldale's Saint Mary Church will sponsor a Cookie Sale, December 10th. Father Paul Borick has more details at (717) 645-2772.

\*\*\*\*\*

## FINALLY IN PRINT

He saw the article in *The Sunday Grit* in Williamsport; a report on "flourishing ecumenism" in Lycoming County. Father Daniel Kovalak, pastor of Holy Cross Church, was quick to respond, claiming that it was "interfaith cooperation," not ecumenism, that was flourishing, and that there is a difference.

So *The Grit* printed a full-page story with photos, based on an interview with the pastor. The story expands on Father Daniel's opinion that "...what passes for ecumenism is really a compromise of 'the fullness of the Gospel,' a *quid pro quo* dialogue that dilutes the central truths of the Bible and 'sacred tradition.'"

"Other area clergy don't see it that way, of course," the article continues. "Members of the United Churches of Lycoming County say ecumenical dialogue here seeks to uncover the truth in all its fullness..." But Father Daniel countered, "...the truth is already known—through the Bible and Sacred Tradition—and...the Orthodox Church has not veered from it over the centuries."

Finally getting to the crux of the issue, *The Grit* asked: "Does that mean his idea of ecumenism is that other faiths should discover and embrace Orthodoxy?"

"You put it bluntly," he says, "but, yes, it's true."

## CHARITIES

Many wonderful works of mercy are performed each year through your support of the Diocesan Charities Drive. December is the month when a collection is taken for this most worthwhile project, through envelopes distributed to each parish. We urge you to be as generous as possible in expressing your love for your fellow man through this diocesan effort.

Thank you  
for supporting

Diocesan Charities

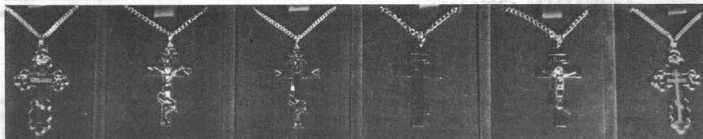
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# OUR BISHOP PINCH-HITS ...AND HITS HOME

*It was October 24th when the scheduled Diocesan Lecture Series speaker failed to appear at South Canaan. His Grace, Bishop Herman, decided to fill the void with some impromptu comments on Education and Church Growth, leading into a question-and-answer period. Some of those comments are quoted below.*

## Lecture Series

"An Orthodox clergyman was asked, in the recently aired television program on the Church in Russia, 'Does it bother you that you cannot educate your people...how does it affect your life...what is the future of your children...you are forbidden to print anything and distribute it?' And the answer that was given is one that is so important to all of us: 'We don't like it, but on the other hand, we're not that worried, because in the home we have always taught about God and the Church.'"

"And we know that this [religious education in the home] was also so important for many of us in past years here in America. We had to learn at least the basic prayers, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the 50th Psalm. To many of our children today, that is something that is so very, very strange. And it becomes so very, very difficult for the priest or church-school teacher to attempt to give some form of education regarding the Church."

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"We see how poor and how weak the structure is within the home. Some parents don't want to discuss with their children the basic teachings about God and His Church, and many times they don't want to discuss it because they themselves don't know about it and never took the time to find out. This causes the Church *not* to grow. It should all begin with that little church that a man and woman establish within the home when they decide to get married. But if we look into that home and we see that there is a weak structure there—there is no growth there—automatically there is nothing to offer to anyone else. All of a sudden, the educational structure of the Church is held back."

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"Today we think that all that is necessary, when John or Mary reaches the age of 7, is that someone from the family drop the child off at church at the appointed hour for instruction, and to leave it to that priest or dedicated teacher, and expect a great miracle to take place—even though that child is only going to be there for about 20 or 45 minutes of actual instruction. Even the good instruction that is given is lost if that child never hears another thing about the Church once he or she leaves. We don't have to go too far to see how true this is. Quietly ask yourself about your own household. We are willing to spend time on absolutely everything except on



educating ourselves, our children, or anyone else, to grow in the Church."

\*\*\*\*\*

"From the time we get up every day, we talk about many, many things; sometimes evil gossip, things of no importance whatsoever. And yet, how much time do we spend in trying to grow spiritually stronger as God's children. Sometimes only seconds do we spend in trying to unite ourselves with God. If it be nothing more than signing ourselves with the Cross, we hesitate even to do that. Isn't it strange that sometimes children must wait until they become 6, 7, or 8 years old before they can enroll in a church-school program—before they can learn that there are prayers that they must say, that there are commandments that they must follow, that there is a Church? They come to church-school and all of this hits them as something so very strange—difficult to accept. And they see that it's only for a certain period of time, and that it's not carried out, not even in their own homes. Many times, if they go to church-school for a few years, and become accustomed to that system, what happens is that they begin to do the same things with their children."

\*\*\*\*\*

"We hear about the Church in Russia that there are only old people there (which isn't true), but we must admit the same thing

about some of our churches. Many times we must say that not only are they the older people who are in our churches, but they are only the women. We see that even in our churches, where we just don't find people between the ages of 16 and 35—at least not actively. It's not that they've become heathens or something, but they've just taken a vacation. All of this because there is no education within the home."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Just like we talk about everything else, we must—if we believe in God, in His Church, and if we believe Jesus Christ to be our Savior—we must also be willing to talk about Him, and He must be a *part* of our lives. He's not someone we think about because we're going to go to confession, or because we're going to get married, or because we think *that* time is drawing near and we may be called to leave this earthly habitation so we'd better start thinking about the One we know can help us to get into the Kingdom of Heaven—absolutely not!...We've got to live it. We don't just say that the person next to us must do it, or just our children must do it—all of us must do it together. It's to be our PERMANENT WAY OF LIFE!"

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CONTINUED



## "LOOK! A religious fanatic."

"Too often, what do we do? We see someone receiving the Eucharist a little more frequently, or we feel that they're praying a little longer in church, or they're venerating a few more icons, and what do we say? 'Look! A religious fanatic!' And yet we think that there's room for church growth...we say that we must draw closer to Christ, to become perfect in His way of life. Let us not mock those people, but let us stand in line with them."

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"Every Sunday, we preach to the people who are in church, but we're not even reaching out to those people who have temporarily walked away. These are the ones who we have to go out after. Every one of us is responsible to do that. Between now and Pascha, bring someone into the Church—be it a relative who has walked away, or someone from another faith who really feels that there is something in the Orthodox faith that they'd like to be a part of."

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"Many times we underestimate people and put the blame on others when it's really our own feelings that we're trying to express. How many times I've heard our people say (for a funeral), 'Don't make it too long because the non-Orthodox are going to complain—they're not going to like it,' or, on Wednesday, 'Even though today's a fast day we have to serve meat because a lot of non-Orthodox are going to be there.' But every time, it's the non-Orthodox who say to me, 'Why did it have to end? Your funerals are so beautiful...your weddings are so beautiful...I could have stayed in church all day.' It is so often the Orthodox person who doesn't want it; it's not the non-Orthodox."

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"If you are a member of the parish council, you have the obligation to work with the priest, to keep the people within the church, and to give them religious instruction. If you sing in the choir, you have that same obligation. If you're in the sisterhood—especially if you're an officer of that sisterhood—you've also accepted that obligation." +

## Assessment Totals Announced

*In response to the Resolution of the 20th Diocesan Assembly, assessing each parish \$35 per member, payable by June 30, 1984, for the purpose of retiring the mortgage on the Diocesan Center/Bishop's Residence and thereby saving some \$360,000 in interest, we are publishing this list of each parish's share. You will be able to follow the progress of this project in each issue of Your Diocese Alive.*

PARISH	1983 CENSUS	ASSESSMENT	MONTHLY ASSESSMENT
Alden Station—Holy Resurrection	107	\$3,745.00	\$624.16
Berwick—Holy Annunciation	218	7,630.00	1,271.66
Dallas—St. Andrew	42	1,470.00	245.00
Dundaff—St. John the Baptist	31	1,085.00	180.84
Edwardsville—St. John the Baptist	364	12,740.00	2,123.34
Jermyn—St. Michael	342	11,970.00	1,995.00
Lopes—St. Vladimir	92	3,220.00	536.68
Mayfield—St. John the Baptist	50	1,750.00	291.68
Nanticoke—St. John the Baptist	221	7,735.00	1,289.16
Old Forge—St. Michael	362	12,670.00	2,111.66
Olyphant—St. Nicholas	92	3,220.00	536.68
Olyphant—All Saints	431	15,085.00	2,514.16
Simpson—St. Basil	119	4,165.00	694.18
Uniondale—SS. Peter and Paul	24	840.00	140.00
Stroudsburg—Holy Trinity	42	1,470.00	245.00
Wilkes-Barre—Holy Resurrection	515	18,025.00	3,004.16
Wilkes-Barre—Holy Trinity	395	13,825.00	2,304.16
Williamport—Elevation of Cross	44	1,540.00	256.68
South Canaan—St. Tikhon	120	4,200.00	700.00
Newark, DE—St. Michael	84	2,940.00	490.00
Bethlehem—St. Nicholas	292	10,220.00	1,703.34
Catasauqua—Holy Trinity	111	3,885.00	647.50
Coatesville—St. Nicholas	43	1,505.00	205.84
Philadelphia—Assumption	250	8,750.00	1,458.34
Philadelphia—St. Nicholas	181	6,335.00	1,055.82
Philadelphia—St. Stephen	252	8,820.00	1,470.00
Pottstown—Holy Trinity	86	3,010.00	501.68
Wallingford—St. Herman	87	3,045.00	507.50
Buckingham—St. Mark	81	2,835.00	472.50
Centraira—SS. Peter and Paul	31	1,085.00	180.84
Coaldale—Nativity of Virgin	397	13,895.00	2,315.84
Frackville—Ascension	323	11,305.00	1,884.00
Harrisburg—Christ the Savior	203	7,105.00	1,184.00
Lykens—Ascension	48	1,680.00	280.00
McAdoo—Holy Trinity	74	2,590.00	431.68
Minersville—SS. Peter and Paul	93	3,255.00	542.50
Mt. Carmel—St. Michael	157	5,495.00	915.84
St. Clair—Assumption	64	2,224.00	373.34
Shenandoah—Holy Ghost	11	358.00	64.18
Shillington—St. Herman	90	3,150.00	525.00

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### Glory to Jesus Christ!

The Old Testament contains several books which fall under the heading of "Wisdom." These books, most notably the book of Job, attempt to answer man's greatest questions regarding his relationships with God, his fellow-man and the world.

Often, the authors of the "Wisdom" books fall short in their answers. Ultimately, they all come up with the very same conclusion: THE QUESTIONS OF GOD ARE GREATER THAN THE ANSWERS OF MAN! As Orthodox Christians in a technological age, we must, again and again, come to this realization.

But how do we go about it? The answer to this is within our reach. St. Paul calls Our Lord Jesus Christ, "The Wisdom of God." All things which lead us to an ever-closer relationship with God are the results of the power and

wisdom of Jesus Christ. And nowhere else in the inhabited world can this growing relationship be better experienced than through the wisdom expressed in the Orthodox Church.

It's there for us 365 days a year! Liturgy after Liturgy, Holy Day after Holy Day, and generation after generation. But we are too often blind to its impact on our lives because our minds are spiritually preoccupied. If only we could do as the Cherubic Hymn instructs—"lay aside all earthly cares"—for a moment, we would indeed come to see the true wisdom of the Church; and, therefore, the greatness of God:

Why is a particular epistle or Gospel section read on a particular day? Why do we use one psalm instead of another for a given feast day? Why are infants allowed to receive Holy Communion? Why are icons more than quaint reli-

gious pictures? Why is there a lenten season prior to the Nativity of Christ? What makes the Great Litany "Great"? Etc., etc., etc.

These and 1,001 other questions have answers—they have meaning! When, during the course of a service, the priest or deacon says "Wisdom," he is asking us to listen to what the Church is telling us about God. He is calling our attention to the fact that the Church does nothing meaningless, but presents Christ, Who is "all in all." He is reminding us of the Old Testament lesson; the questions of God are greater than the answers of man!

The wisdom of the Church makes sense! Pause, especially during this lenten season—this traditional period of increased prayer and repentance—to grasp it! Then, you too will be able to ask, with the psalmist, "WHO IS SO GREAT A GOD AS OUR GOD?" +

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*These pages are for dialogue and debate; for expression and examination of issues pertinent to the Orthodox Church, our Diocese, and the society of which we are a part. Your comments are solicited, either in article or letter form. Address your correspondence to: Your Diocese Alive, The Diocesan Center, South Canaan, PA 18459.*

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## Viewpoint

### THE COUNCIL: PART 2



Committee chairmen met frequently to discuss the many details that confronted them on the road to Philadelphia. Our Diocese supplied 104 energetic volunteers to the 7th All American Council staff.

*The following is part 2 of a report on the 7th All American Council of the Orthodox Church in America (August, 1983) written by a delegate to that Council, Dr. Greg Szymaniak, of Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Williamsport, Pa.*

The All American Council meetings and plenary sessions following the first plenary session explored the possible means of achieving the goal established at that initial session: to fulfill Christ's command to bring the Gospel to all. An outline of the major highlights of these forums will hopefully serve as "food for thought, conversation, and ultimate action" for all readers.

Mr. Richard Reidy, Treasurer of the Orthodox Church in America, described six vital signs of a healthy Church: (1) good pastoral leadership, (2) a well mobilized and active laity, (3) successful "grouping" within the Church, that is, members seeking each other out to informally form fellowship, spiritual, and/or membership groups in order to meet each other's needs, (4) the Church's provision of "real" needs as well as "perceived" needs of the community, (5) a successful program or method of evangelizing the unchurched, and (6) the proper alignment of priorities in Orthodox order. Most certainly a Church with strong vital signs such as these will be destined to grow.



Mrs. Sophie Koulomzin, a noted Orthodox educator, considered a Church community as a "good family" which has five essential characteristics: (1) it allows growth, change, and development in an atmosphere of security and love, (2) it is a safe place for serious relationships, (3) members have the experience of being part of a *living* whole, (4) members grow in a wholesome manner as they develop attitudes shaped by other members, and (5) members maintain a close relationship with those who have left the immediate family.

With a firm foundation of a "healthy Church" and a "good family" to work with, a Church can continue to grow; however, several preconditions to Church Growth exist:

1. The pastor must want the Church to grow;
2. The people must want the Church to grow; and
3. The Church must prioritize and direct its time and activities either inward or outward.

Once these preconditions are realized, the Church makes its commitment to growth. This commitment is reflected *directly* by the resources allocated to growth: people, time, and money. All three of these resources must be used in an organized plan to achieve specific goals by utilizing the talents and skills of Church members. Since we never have enough time (or money, for that matter) we must use it wisely and hopefully our intake will equal our output. Also, a percentage of the Church's budget should be earmarked for Church Growth.



The approximate use of the highlighted "guidelines" can provide an excellent plan of action for Church Growth, however, the most important component is the individual. Each parishioner must want to grow spiritually in order for Church Growth to occur. An individual commitment

- to learn more about Christ, His teachings, and the Orthodox Way,
  - to serve Christ and His Church, and
  - to live "Christ-like" lives,
- by all of us will benefit the Church, the community and ourselves. ✙

Mr. S. Alan Psolyar, co-chairman of the All American Council, takes a well-deserved bow at the banquet (above right). (above left) His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius arrives for his press conference. (below) The Metropolitan and His Grace, Bishop Herman, register for the Council under the supervision of Mrs. Helen Labick of Philadelphia.



# NOT JUST PRETTY PICTURES & MUSIC: what you see is what you hear is what you sing ...the Truth

## The Nativity

*All creation praises Him. The wise men, representing creation's men of high estate, offer gifts to their King.*

*"The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib..."  
(Isaiah 1:3)*

*He's talking to the devil who is trying to fill him with doubts about the circumstances of Mary's giving birth while still a virgin.*



*All creation salutes its King...  
the Heavens offer a star.*

*The Child's swaddling clothes  
prefigure His burial clothes.*

*The washing of the Child, like  
any other child, represents His  
complete human nature.*

*NOTE HOW THE HYMN (below) DESCRIBES THE ICON (above)*

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 STAR;  
SINCE FOR OUR SAKE THE ETERNAL GOD  
WAS BORN AS A LITTLE CHILD.

by Father Theodore Heckman

*While gentle silence enveloped all things,  
And night in its swift course was now half gone,  
Thine all-powerful Word leaped from Heaven,  
from the Royal Throne,  
Into the midst of the land...*

*(Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15)*

From the very beginning of creation God had foreseen the Fall: the universe which He created in perfection now subject to decay, corruption, and death. So, from the beginning of the Fall, He prepared the remedy. This remedy was *extraordinary*: He would descend Himself into His creation. God would become man. And He would struggle with that decay, corruption, and death from *within*. He would even experience death, sacrificing Himself "for the life of the world." He would share the whole consequence of the fallen universe, and He would raise it up again, re-creating it, and lifting it higher than it was in the beginning. Higher even than the realm of angels (which is very high, indeed)—to the very Throne of the Godhead.

The whole history of humanity before the birth of Jesus Christ was a preparation for this extraordinary event. But this preparation is seen most clearly and directly in Hebrew Scriptures. The Old Testament is a preparation which has been fulfilled in the New. Thus, we can look at each important event in the History of Israel as a preview or foreshadowing of that which was fulfilled by Christ. The following examples are but a few of these:

The flood, Noah, and the ark  
The turbulence of sin, Christ, and the Church

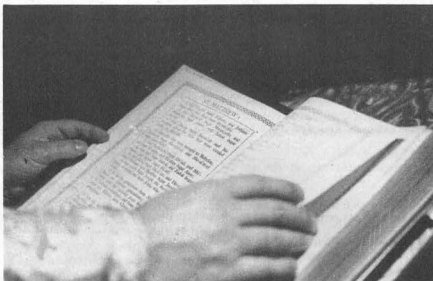
The chosen people  
The Elect, the Church

Old Israel  
New Israel

Cain's slaying of Abel  
Humanity's slaying of Christ  
Melchizedek, King of Salem  
Christ the King and High Priest

Melchizedek brings forth bread and wine  
Christ institutes the Eucharist

see NATIVITY...page 12



## WHY ARE TWO DECEMBER GOSPEL READINGS DEVOTED TO OLD TESTAMENT PEOPLE?

*It is a bold, but absolutely true, statement that the Orthodox Church is the Church in which the Holy Scriptures were written and are preserved. While daily, private reading of the Scriptures is always encouraged, it is in the Church—in the context of its worship services—that Scripture can best be understood in its fullness.*

*It was not by chance, then, that the readings for each day were assigned to help guide us to a full appreciation of the Christian Revelation. This is seen vividly in this season of the Nativity. As a case in point, consider the Gospel readings you will hear at the Divine Liturgies of the two Sundays before Christmas.*

If you really listen to the Gospel reading (Luke 14:16-24) on December 11th, you'll be faced with the question: what do all of these Old Testament characters have to do with the upcoming birth of Christ?

see GOSPEL...page 13

## NATIVITY...from page 11

Barren Sarah bears a son, Isaac  
Barren Anna bears Mary the Virgin

Offering of Abraham's son, Isaac  
Offering of God's Son, Jesus

Twelve sons of Jacob, the Twelve Tribes  
The Twelve Apostles

The flight into Egypt  
Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt with the Child

Deliverance from Egypt  
Deliverance from sin and death

Moses, the deliverer  
Christ, the deliverer

Pasover  
Pascha, Resurrection

Paschal lamb  
Christ the Lamb of God

The wanderings of the Chosen People  
The Church until the Judgement

Entering the Promised Land  
Christ's triumphant entrance into Paradise,  
bringing His people

The waters of the rock  
Baptism

The manna  
Eucharist

The Law given on Mt. Sinai  
The Sermon on the Mount

David the King of Israel  
Son of David, the Eternal King

David the shepherd boy  
Christ the Good Shepherd

David healing with music  
Christ the Great Physician

Assumption of Elijah  
Ascension of Christ

Elijah multiplies the widow's wheat and oil  
Christ feeds the multitudes

Raising of the Shunamite's son  
Raising of Lazarus

Johah in the fish three days  
Christ in the grave three days

The three holy youths in the furnace  
Christ's harrowing of hell

The "dew" of deliverance  
Waters of baptism

The old Eve  
Mary the Virgin, the new Eve

Worship of the sun  
Christ the Sun of Righteousness

Birth of the sun  
Birth of Christ

Rising of the sun from the East  
Christ, the Orient from on high

The old Adam  
Christ, the New Adam

"The celebration of Christ's Birth," says St. Gregory the Theologian, "is not a festival of creation, but a festival of re-creation." The whole universe acquires a new meaning, new life. The joy, the beauty, the wonder of Christmas is the inexpressible excitement of finding a new world. Everything old, incomplete, yearning for perfection has now become new, complete, fulfilled. Of course, this does not all take place at the moment of Incarnation. Christ's passion, death, resurrection and ascension are necessary. But the Birth in Bethlehem initiated the New Creation.

The Tropar (main hymn) of the Feast of Our Lord's Birth speaks of the transformation from an imperfect worship to that of perfection:

**THY NATIVITY, O CHRIST  
OUR GOD,  
HAS SHONE TO THE WORLD  
THE LIGHT OF WISDOM**

The original text read: "has risen upon the world as the light of wisdom..." The birth of Christ is identified with the rising of the sun. Since the most ancient times, men have looked to the rising of the sun with awe and a sense of reverence. This was not only because of the natural beauty of the sunrise, but also because men knew intuitively that life on earth is totally dependent on the warmth and energy from the sun. And if the daily sunrise was a proper moment for reverence and worship, even more was the annual "birth of the sun" at the winter solstice a time for universal worship. The Holy Fathers wisely set the date for Our Lord's Nativity on the exact date of the pagan festival not just to counteract a pagan celebration, but to transform that imperfect worship into perfection. The true Sun of Righteousness is Christ Jesus, God in the Flesh, perfect God and perfect man, the fulfillment of all the deepest yearnings of humanity.

**FOR BY IT [the Nativity] THOSE  
WHO WORSHIPPED THE STARS  
WERE TAUGHT BY A STAR,  
TO ADORE THEE,  
THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The transformation of the world from the old to new includes the transformation of worship as the highest activity of man. The unusual Star of Bethlehem had to be followed by those whose primary study was the stars. This was the most unique celestial event in the history of astronomy—and it led to the humble manger where a little baby, the Light of the World, was lying. The uncreated divine Light which the Apostles were to see on Mount Tabor was there, beneath the Star of Bethlehem, bringing Heaven down to earth, reuniting again these two realms which had been separated by the fall.

**AND TO KNOW THEE,  
THE ORIENT FROM ON HIGH.  
O LORD, GLORY TO THEE!**

As the physical light, the sun, rises each day from the East, so the spiritual Light, the radiance of God Himself, leaps to the earth in the midst of the dark night. And the Light begins to shine in the darkness, and no amount of darkness can overcome it [John 1:5].

Christ is the "sun which knows no setting" illumining all men and all creation. He is Light of Light which makes possible the true knowledge of God. Early Christians called Baptism *illumination*, since it was the initiation into this radiant knowledge of God. All former knowledge, all former worship is obsolete. All that is false is abolished. All that which was dim and hazy is now seen clearly in the perfect light of the Day-Spring from on High.

The other main hymn of the Nativity is the Kondak. And it is this hymn which is so beautifully illustrated on the traditional icons of Christmas:

**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 STAR;  
SINCE FOR OUR SAKE THE  
ETERNAL GOD WAS BORN AS  
A LITTLE CHILD.**

Two aspects are shown here: what has happened to God, and what has happened to man (and all creation). God has done something He had never done before. The Son, begotten in eternity, now is born in time;

see NATIVITY...page 13



## NATIVITY...from page 12

that which was spirit has assumed flesh. And the effect on man, the world, the whole cosmos is that it all has become new, sanctified, transformed. Because all creation is affected, all creation is represented in the Kondak and the Icon: the angels, the heavens, men of high estate—the Wise Men, men of low estate—the shepherds, the earth, wild life, humanity.

And each of these has an offering for the occasion:

The angels offer their song  
The heavens, a star  
The Magi, precious gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh  
The shepherds, their wonder  
The earth, a cave  
The wild life, the manger  
Humanity offers its most marvelous flower: the Virgin

Christ's birth takes place in the midst of a dark cave, revealing so clearly the state of the world at the moment when God arrives. The world is in darkness, enslaved to death. And the Light comes, quietly, humbly. Though He was God, He takes the form of a servant. Though He is our King, He comes as an obedient subject. And He accepts all our condition, even death.

In fact, this very cave of His birth is a foreshadowing of the tomb which will hold His lifeless body. The swaddling clothes foreshadow His burial clothes.

Some of the foreshadowing shows the opposite of what will happen: the ox and ass, for example. "The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know me, my people do not understand" (Isaiah 1:3).

Sometimes the Icon shows the presence of midwives assisting at the Birth. This Child is treated as all other children, it has the same earthly needs. Christ is fully man.

Joseph, the Betrothed, is not in the central group of figures; he is not mentioned in the Kondak. In the Icon he is sitting off to the side, looking somewhat troubled. There is a bent figure of a man by him (the devil) speaking with him, filling him with doubts. How is a virgin birth possible? Only in fables! The laws of nature prohibit it. Joseph represents the difficulty mankind has throughout history: man, with his limited vision, and limited understanding, finds it so hard to accept that which is beyond reason. Faith is truly a task, yet even a tiny bit of it can move mountains.

And the Virgin who shines with the beauty of pure faith and wisdom, looks with tenderness and compassion on Joseph (in some

icons). She is forever the Icon of compassion for all mankind with its faithlessness and doubt. She is the image of true humanity restored by Christ, her Son. She is the image of the cosmos redeemed, the New Jerusalem. She is "the cloud of light, the vessel of manna, the burning bush unconsumed, the bridal chamber, the throne, the mountain, the mystical door, the joy of all" (from the Akathist Hymn).

She is the "woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, with a crown of stars" (Rev. 12:1). Her color is blue, suggesting the spaciousness of the heavens. As she conceives and bears the Son of God, she is like a bird flying across the sky, leaving no trace. The sky remains as it was, so Christ

## GOSPEL...from page 11

That day, two Sundays before Christmas, is the Sunday of the Forefathers; a commemoration of the patriarchs and prophets from Adam to John the Baptist.

The Church, in presenting us with this Gospel reading, is preparing us to fully understand the implications of the Nativity of Christ. This is a reminder that Christ was "veiled" in the Old Testament; He was there, but not clearly seen until He Himself drew the connection. Consult Luke 24:27 to see that Jesus Christ Himself "interpreted to them in all the [Old Testament] Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

This Sunday reading reminds us of those who, from the beginning of time, preached and prepared the way for Jesus Christ. "Recognize in Abel the first martyr...in Melchisedek the type of the eternal priest; in Abraham the spirit of faith...in Isaac, the spirit of sonship and of sacrifice, in Jacob free election, patient service and conversation; and, in Joseph the great features of the Passion of Christ's redemptive work."

Already on this Sunday, two weeks before Christmas, you will hear the Kontakion (sung after the Small Entrance) pointing the way to the coming Feast: "...the Virgin gives birth to the Word in a cave..."

is born and she remains virgin. Because Christ is the second Adam, all mankind is reborn in her. Her motherhood is universal.

Christmas: it's not the time of a short-lived "peace on earth" or superficial "good-will among men." It is a cosmic event, a most extraordinary wedding: "Heaven and earth are united again." "God has come upon earth, and man has gone up to Heaven." We Orthodox are called to sing with the angels: "Glory to God in the highest, for He has sent redemption to His people." ✦

For more information, see *Theology of the Icon*, by Leonid Ouspensky, published by Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978.

The next Sunday (December 18th), the entire first Chapter of Matthew is read, tracing the genealogy of Christ, from Abraham to Joseph. Why more names? Is this a history lesson?

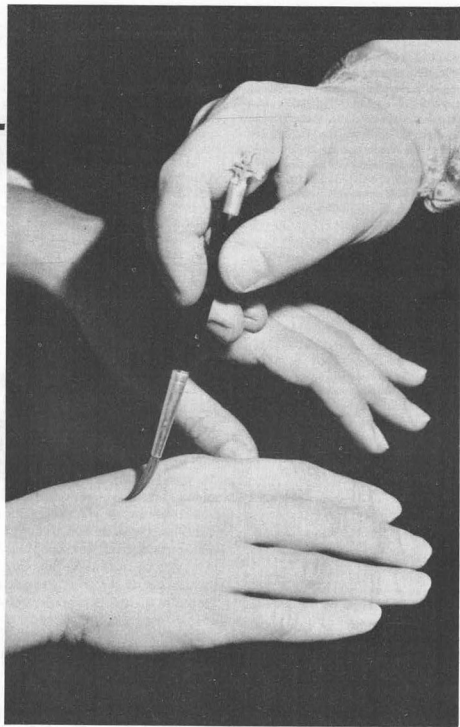
In part, it is. But in greater part, there is a spiritual message of great importance to the understanding of Christ's birth. Understand that Jesus Christ's ancestors were not all holy and just people. "Amongst them are also sinners; those who have committed incest, adultery, murder...Jesus wanted, humanly, to be linked with 'all that' and 'all those.' He wanted to clear a way for Himself through the sins and crimes of men. And so it is the history of each one of us that He takes upon Himself and overcomes. For each one of us has some of the features of those of Jesus' ancestors who are the furthest from holiness. In each of us can be found, either dormant or awakened, the sins of the patriarchs and of their children."

Notice that the Gospel reading goes on to describe Joseph's doubts, which are also depicted in the Nativity icon, showing again how many, necessary and precious are the ways in which Christian Truth is revealed to us in the context of the Church and her worship. Scripture and the Orthodox Church have always been truly inseparable. ✦

Quotations are gratefully taken from, *The Year of Grace of the Lord, by a Monk of the Eastern Church, Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.*

# Conversions

## WHO IS CONVERTING, WHEN & HOW?



by Father Daniel Kovalak

*The proceedings of the Seventh All American Council concerned themselves with the matter of Church Growth. Adding a good deal of insight was a survey of converts to the Orthodox Church, sponsored by the English Language Community of Christ the Savior Church of Manhattan, New York. What follows are excerpts and remarks from that survey which was presented by Sarah Loft.*

*By way of introduction, a "convert" is understood to be "one who was not previously an Orthodox Christian." We should remember, however, that EVERY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN is a convert! No one is "born Orthodox!" Of course, there are those who are born of Orthodox parents, but not until the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation are performed is anyone "Orthodox."*

*The figures reported below do not include the respondents (29%) who found Orthodoxy by marrying an Orthodox Christian.*

### PREVIOUS RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The survey, which involved over 500 converts, showed, generally, that converts do not come from any one religious background. Of those responding, 30% were former Roman Catholics and 21% Episcopalian. Another 43% came to Orthodoxy from other Protestant and Evangelical churches.

### AGE AT RECEPTION INTO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Though converts have come to the Church at all ages (from 16 through 75+), the majority converted between the ages of 21 and 30.

Further breakdown shows that the majority of males converted between the ages of 21 and 25 (21%), and females between the ages of 21 and 30 (61%).

#### LENGTH OF INTEREST IN ORTHODOXY BEFORE CONVERSION

Following an initial contact with the Orthodox Church through varied means (see below), some 58% of recent converts embraced the Orthodox Faith within a two year period. This figure derives extra meaning when considering that many parishes, especially mission parishes, conduct an active program of instruction, often called the "catechumenate," with intensive study for a period of six months to one year.

#### INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

"First impressions linger." In discussing Church Growth, we must recognize the fact that someone's first introduction to Orthodoxy is crucial. Every parish and each member must be prepared at all times to provide a warm and loving welcome to guests and visitors in their churches. Most of all, it is important that members invite their own friends to attend the church.

The responses from the survey are most important in this regard. Some 33% were first introduced to the Orthodox Church by a friend! In addition, 5% came into contact with Orthodoxy by merely attending a service (e.g., wedding, funeral, Good Friday, etc.). Another 5% "found" Orthodoxy through educational materials (see below). Finally, and strange as it may seem, some 16% were introduced to Orthodoxy by "external" means, e.g., a lecture, a college course, travel to an Orthodox country, or television programs!

This initial contact, again, is crucial. Every parish should adopt means whereby these channels are available to all who seek them. Simply having a number of books available can provide information and knowledge which can help satisfy the needs of many potential converts. (The survey also showed that over 65% of the respondents have a graduate-level education!)

#### CONTACTS LEADING TO ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

It is, of course, one thing to read about Orthodoxy and another to become actively involved. The means by which this is accomplished also provides us with some "food for thought." What keeps people, who have had initial contact, coming and becoming involved? Nearly 58% of those responding said their main reason was the spirituality in Orthodoxy. Fifty-four percent were moved and inspired through the Divine Liturgy. Though these are the largest categories, many others were also included as follows: Liturgical music, icons, various matters of the-

ology, sacraments, Church history, patristics, and a sense of community.

#### EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Many converts stated that their reading became an influential part of their becoming Orthodox. Other than the Bible and liturgical texts and materials, the respondents offered numerous texts which they considered instrumental in their conversion.

At the top of the list was *The Orthodox Church*, by Timothy Ware. This selection, by far, outnumbered other responses (51%). Fol-

lowing, in respective order, were: *A Handbook of the Orthodox Faith* (4 volumes), by Father Thomas Hopko; *The Orthodox Way*, by Father Kallistos Ware; *For the Life of the World*, by Father Alexander Schmemmann; *The Way of the Pilgrim* (trans. by French); and *The Faith We Hold*, by Archbishop Paul of Finland.

Due to the extreme importance of this matter, the survey report strongly suggested "that one of our priorities as Orthodox Christians is to make Orthodox literature available as widely, and as accessible as possible."

## "The big problem is that we are so invisible."

#### DIFFICULTIES

Converts were requested to identify what they found to be the major obstacles in their approach to the Orthodox Church. Although it is impossible to group most of the responses into various categories, several key issues became apparent and are reflected in the following quotes (followed by the state of convert's residence):

"A young person, stopping by our Church one Sunday to observe the Liturgy, asked a man at the candle stand, 'What kind of church is this?' The response came back: 'This is a Russian church.'" (Ohio)

The biggest problem is confusing ethnicity with real Tradition. And, ironically, a corresponding problem is the subtle move to Westernize and/or Americanize Orthodoxy so as to rob her of her genuine mystical tradition and her true transcendence." (Pennsylvania)

"In 12 years, no priest and only one layman actually invited me to affiliate with the Orthodox Church. People generally want to feel wanted. Beyond that, Our Lord did not say, 'Go, wait;' rather, He said that the harvest was to be gathered, which implies active recruitment." (Alabama)

"We feel an incredible emptiness and pain in not being able to bring the Church into all areas of our lives. I'm thinking here of other denominations which have countless programs for drug rehabilitation, residential homes, campus fellowship centers, high school youth groups, outreach, soup kitchens for the poor, TV programs, retreat centers, etc., etc. In other words, the Church needs to more fully involve our WHOLE lives in its life." (Massachusetts)

"A big problem is, of course, that we are so invisible that many people haven't heard of us, and so don't approach the Church at all." (New York)

"I'd never heard of the Orthodox Church before. My impression at the time was that it was a Greek-language branch of the Roman Catholic Church." (Pennsylvania)

"Consideration should be given to jumping over the idea of first becoming pan Orthodox, then American Orthodox. There are too many Old World rivalries, prejudices to overcome." (Pennsylvania)

Finally, one response seems to sum up all the rest in major obstacles confronting Orthodoxy. "The biggest problem was finding it!" (Kansas) Certainly, Orthodox visibility is a point which must be worked on.

#### CONCLUSION: A DIOCESEAN OVERVIEW

Indeed, the results of the "convert survey" offer much in terms of concrete suggestions and ideas to be considered on the parish level in every area of our Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania. Our recent Diocesan Assembly has made a beginning by offering a vision "for an invigorated Diocese." Newly-organized departments of service have had meetings. The financial problems are slowly being solved. All "instruments for growth" are in place.

But the one thing which this survey tells us—in a voice, loud and clear—is that the DESIRE to grow must be that of every Orthodox Christian. Unless EVERYONE is involved in inviting new people to church, unless EVERYONE is involved in heightening the visibility of the Church, unless EVERYONE is involved in their own personal, spiritual growth, the Church will NOT grow.

The decision, then, rests with EVERYONE of us. IT'S TIME TO DECIDE FOR GROWTH!



Nancy, Larry and little Betsy Kane are converts to Orthodoxy. In a candid interview, they told us some things we were probably taking for granted.

## Conversions

### SO YOU THINK NO ONE IS INTERESTED? ASK NANCY & LARRY KANE

**YDA:** Does it bother you when someone calls you a "convert?"

**Larry:** No, I still think of myself as a convert and I always will. Part of my conversion is this process of discovering the Church and growing, and I don't want that ever to be impeded in any way.

**Nancy:** I remember when a woman in our home parish asked me—I remember the feeling I had when she asked me this—"Well, why do you come? What is it about our church that you really respond to?" And she seemed really surprised that there *was* anything. I said that it's so beautiful and there's so much spirituality, and she just looked at me with this amazement...and that's the first time I realized that some people, who have been brought up in the Church, don't view it the same way we do. To us, it's so different from a Protestant background...it's like a rare jewel, but there's a difference when you've always had it and never been outside it.

**YDA:** Where have you been, Faith-wise, in your lives?

**Larry:** I was brought up in a Protestant family, not a particularly religious family, although we'd go to church on Sunday. But by the time I was 12 or 13, even my family wasn't going to church that much and I remember going myself, but there wasn't much in the church that I really responded to. As I got older, I was very troubled by those usual questions of life; why am I here, what is the purpose of all this? That led to a real complex road that took me to a number of different places...but it all seemed to be leading up to the Orthodox Church. My first contact with it [Orthodoxy] was through my sister who married into the Faith about 8 years ago. At that time, we went to her church and had a "take it or leave it" attitude. It was nice, but it wasn't particularly anything that moved us...

**Nancy:** In fact, it sort of scared me. It was mostly the fervor. I got this real feeling of

what was going on, but it really frightened me because I had never been exposed to anything like that before. I almost fainted! After that, I felt that it would *never* be the Orthodox Church, even though I was searching.... It was several years later when we were *really* searching that it came up again.

**Larry:** There were no Orthodox churches available then, so we were looking at the Roman Catholics. We were even in a philosophical group that tended toward Eastern religions, but then everything started leading back to Christ. That's when we got interested in Roman Catholics and lots of different groups. Then in 1980, as part of our search, but in the name of my sister (so she and her husband would have somewhere to go when they came to visit), we went to look at this Orthodox church in Berlin, New Hampshire...a little over an hour's drive from our home. We went up on a Sunday afternoon and we were walking around, and as we were about to leave, the priest spotted us and he was very pleasant, and showed us around, and



invited us to come back. [This was Father Vladimir Soyvrda, pastor of Holy Resurrection Church, Berlin, N.H.] We were very interested in what we saw and what we felt just in the church...just by the atmosphere in the church building, we could tell it was a very special place. So maybe a month or two went by before we were able to get back, and we drove up for Divine Liturgy one Sunday morning...and that was it! We became just about the most regular faces in that parish. From that moment, there wasn't any question...we had just gone head-over-heels.

**YDA:** What was the difference between this experience in 1980 and the one five years before? I mean, was this parish better?

Nancy: No, no, it was ourselves. Five years before, we hadn't been terribly interested in Christ. We were very liberal Protestants. Christ? Oh, yes, but you could take Him or leave Him. There was no necessity.

**YDA:** What was your idea of "The Church" when you were Protestants?

Nancy: My father is a Protestant minister, so I grew up very much in that church...as the minister's kid, you do everything, but I never joined when the time came for the 13-year-olds to join...because I just felt a big lack of something. I knew there was something there because of my father's feelings toward Christ, but I always felt a lack. We had to find this together.

**YDA:** Having been down several roads, can you now say you are finding a different kind of Christianity in Orthodoxy?

Nancy: It's as if there's a tiny kernel of it in all Faiths...there's the same basis, but it's just that the Orthodox Church is like a huge flower compared to a tiny bud. The Liturgy appeals to all the senses, the spirituality...the teachings...it's all there.

**YDA:** Were you astounded by that?

Larry: Yes! Absolutely! Picture this liberal Protestant background...no sacramental life...the outlook being Christ the teacher...the emphasis on doing good works...that's all well and good as far as it goes, but it's a very incomplete picture of the whole Christian life. I couldn't answer any real needs through that. In finding the Orthodox Church, I found the answers to many questions, on every level—emotional, intellectual, guidance for spiritual life—the whole works. It was overwhelming...this is it!



**YDA:** What happened on that day in 1980 when you attended Liturgy? You showed up one Sunday morning...only the pastor knew who you were. What happened?

Larry: First of all, we got the times mixed up, so we got there an hour early...we arrived when the priest was arriving, so he let us in. We had heard that you stand up, so we stood there for an hour before Liturgy started. We could hear the priest saying his prayers in the altar and doing something. Then, about a half hour passes, someone else comes, starts lighting candles, people are venerating the icons, the Hours begin...it's like this whole process is just coming to life...you just keep adding elements to it...

Nancy:...and then the bells rang...

Larry:...yes, and it was the most incredible thing...the priest opened the Royal Doors, and the sun came out—it had been cloudy—all of a sudden a shaft of light came through the window and right across the floor...incredible...the bells are ringing, the doors open, the lights go on...the priest says, "Blessed is the Kingdom..." I literally felt as though, in that moment, I was literally picked up and held. It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. And there was no question that I had found what I was looking for...there wasn't anything to think about. After the Liturgy, there was a coffee hour that the people came and invited us to. No one put us off at all.

Nancy: Betsy was very young at the time, and she was screaming, but everyone was really nice...very supportive of having her in church even if she rattled about it.

Larry: We became a part of the family very quickly. Most of our questions about the Faith were answered by the priest. Questions on "why do you do this or that" went not where at coffee hours. The people didn't seem to have a lot of answers.

**YDA:** Did that make you wonder?

Larry: Yes, but by that time, we had read *The Way of the Pilgrim* and Timothy Ware...

Nancy:...plus, I don't think a lot of people are aware that, when you're brought up in a completely Protestant manner, even making the sign of the Cross brings up a tremendous resistance at first...it's very traumatic. Just knowing how to do it...and also, venerating the icons—for someone brought up in a different background—is really a hard thing to do, and very full of emotion when you finally do it. You have to learn how to do these things.

Larry: I remember a certain hesitancy at the beginning—not that I didn't want to—but all the past comes back, and you have to deal with this conflict, just walking from the back of the church to the front of the church.

**YDA:** How are these feelings overcome?

Nancy: Time...and involvement in the Church...and having someone who takes the time to tell you. We didn't know when to make the sign of the Cross, no one told us at first...

Larry:...and you have this kind of pride that you don't want to be "monkey see, monkey do"...

Nancy:...and you think everyone's looking at you...

Larry:...and so, by that time, you've been to Liturgy enough that you're familiar with some of the litanies and exclamations, and you know that there are certain times when everyone crosses themselves, and yet, some do at other times, so there's this confusion. And you're getting ready to, and you see others not, so you don't. These things seem simple to someone who has been in the Church all of their life. I've yet to see any

CONTINUED.

kind of introductory pamphlet that I thought was really useful to someone who walked into the church for the first time.

YDA: Do you, looking back on these early experiences, ever think that these things we do could be impediments to the Church's work in America; that they could stop people from finding the Truth of Orthodoxy; that we should cut through them to the core of the matter?

Nancy: No! Having seen that resistance in myself, and overcoming it, is an absolutely necessary step...

Larry: ...that's not something you can remove, "OK, guys, we're not going to make the sign of the Cross anymore so we don't offend some Protestants"...

Nancy: ...plus, early on, we were invited to sing in the choir. This made a tremendous difference. We didn't know anything about the Divine Liturgy, and singing—especially the verses during Vespers—we realized the incredible theology that is in the music. We would just go home and try to remember some of the verses...

Larry: "...you gave birth without..." What was that?

Nancy: ...first, the music was very beautiful, but singing it and realizing the ideas that are contained in it...

YDA: But there must have been one final, great stumbling block that was difficult to accept about the Faith.

Nancy: Yes, it was the way some people acted that just didn't seem to go along with the preaching; arguing with the priest, yelling at council meetings, etc. I would always judge them, not realizing that by doing so, I was putting myself in the same boat.

Larry: For me, maybe it was Confession, which doesn't exist in the Protestant world. You can accept it intellectually, but when it comes time to actually do it, a lot of old resistance comes out, and then you get the first word out, and the tears start flowing. It's just like years of accumulated old crust just starts to fall off.

YDA: Has this [your conversion] made a change in your lives? Some say that Orthodoxy really doesn't have much practical application to life.

Larry: I don't agree with that. I noticed right off that there was the Gospel reading and then the sermon. I didn't believe it; the sermon lasted 7 or 8 minutes, spoke only about—and followed—the Gospel reading, interpreted it, looking at it from different angles, giving some practical relationship to our own lives, and that was it. What I'd been

brought up with was a harangue for three-quarters of an hour, about the preacher's own personal life, or things completely off-the-wall and having no relationship that I could see to anything. In the Orthodox Church, the sermon is an integral part of the Liturgy, and because it follows the Gospel so closely, it can't go wrong...

Nancy: ...and it gives us something practical to work with during the week...

Larry: ...and always some thought that had never occurred to us before...



YDA: If your sister hadn't been Orthodox, would you have ever heard about it?

Larry: My own feeling is that I would have found the Church no matter what...

YDA: But to so many, the Faiths of America are Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish. Doesn't this lack of exposure hurt us?

Nancy: Oh yes. The only way we found there was a parish there was because they had an ad in the newspaper.

Larry: There are a lot of people who are looking exactly for the Orthodox Church...

Nancy: There are a lot of our friends who have been really taken by it, but there's no church near where they live...

Larry: It's exactly what they're looking for. They've been through the Catholic churches, they've been through the Protestantism...

Nancy: I always noticed that when our parish would be having a picnic or a bake sale, I'd ask them to put out some Orthodox books or icons for sale, but they'd say, "Oh, no one will be interested in them." And I'd say, "They are, look at us."

Larry: Our own people resisted the idea of putting out icons or prayer books...

Nancy: We'd rent a hall and have white elephants or crafts, but we wouldn't have a table of Orthodox items.

YDA: Do you think that Orthodoxy can reach these people who are ready for it but don't know it exists, and other Americans, without compromising itself?

Nancy: Yes, because if Orthodoxy did compromise itself, these people wouldn't be interested.

**"There are a lot  
of people who  
are looking  
exactly for the  
Orthodox Church  
...but don't know  
it exists."**

YDA: What should the Church concentrate on in reaching America?

Larry: On the parish level, there must be a spiritual life somehow evident. If there's not something there that people coming in can see that is really alive besides a beautiful Liturgy, I think the disparity between what is preached and what is practiced will turn a lot of people off. And we all need to know that we are part of a greater whole...and world of Orthodoxy...not just our individual parishes.

Nancy: We really felt the need for more adult education or retreats where we could learn more about the Church. We were, for a while, not aware that anything like that was going on. There seem to be camps for children, but it would really be nice to have more retreats—weekend, or week-long—for the adults, too.

Larry: I think we're representative of a certain age-group of Americans who reach a certain level of maturity, and who realize that there are needs which are not being met in their lives and don't know just how to go about meeting them...

Nancy: There's also a lack of information on the Church. And the things that *do* come out on the differences—a different date for Pascha, calendar problems—and people don't even know we're Christians...

Larry: So many people thing we're Jewish when we say we're Orthodox...so we say we're Orthodox Church of America. "Well, what's that?" They know about our food and other differences, but the *Orthodox* message is lost...

Nancy: My father still gets these magazines that are put out by the United Church of Christ, and every single issue I saw this year had an article on the Orthodox Church, because these people were very interested in ecumenism. There were big Protestant groups going to Russia to visit the Orthodox churches there. They didn't realize that we are right in their own backyard. I felt that these Protestants were more interested in publicizing the Orthodox Church than was the Orthodox Church itself.

YDA: How has your conversion changed your lives, from the time of your Chrismation to the present?

Larry: We feel a part of this *living* Body of Christ, through the Sacraments, and through the Liturgical cycle. It's not an abstraction anymore. In the Protestant mentality that I had, church is something that you plug into every Sunday for an hour, and then unplug for the rest of the week...and it's something that's so separate and divorced from the rest of life, even though you're supposed to be Christian in your whole life, no matter what your Faith.

YDA: How do you know that your search is over?

Larry: That goes along with my always feeling that I'm a convert...because I'm still growing *within* the Church...always discovering new things *within* the Church...going deeper and deeper...

Nancy: You see, it's so obvious to me that my level of understanding is so very small, but that it can grow and grow and *never* stop... it's like the search will never be over. There is no end to growing.

YDA: One final question: what would you say about Orthodoxy to a person of another Faith now?

Larry: I wouldn't dwell on differences. On the other hand, I wouldn't be wishy-washy about our beliefs. We must use our Christian love in approaching others because I don't think we're going to argue anyone into the Faith. But we may *love* them in. ✚

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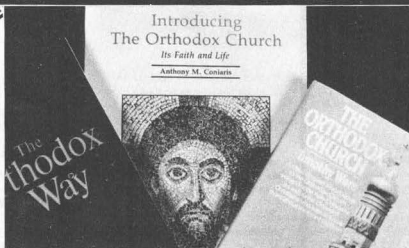
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# DAILY GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READINGS FOR DECEMBER 1983

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 <i>1 Thess. 2:9-14</i> <i>Luke 11:14-23</i>	2 <i>1 Thess. 2:14-19</i> <i>Luke 11:23-26</i>	3 <i>2 Cor. 8:1-5</i> <i>Luke 8:16-21</i>
4 <i>Eph. 2:4-10</i> <i>Luke 8:26-39</i>	5 <i>1 Thess. 2:20-3:8</i> <i>Luke 11:29-33</i>	6* <i>1 Thess. 3:9-13</i> <i>Luke 11:34-41</i>	7 <i>1 Thess. 4:1-12</i> <i>Luke 11:42-46</i>	8 <i>1 Thess. 5:1-8</i> <i>Luke 11:47-12:1</i>	9 <i>1 Thess. 5:9-13,</i> <i>24-28</i> <i>Luke 12:2-12</i>	10 <i>2 Cor. 11:1-6</i> <i>Luke 9:1-6</i>
11 <i>Eph. 2:14-22</i> <i>Luke 8:41-56</i>	12** <i>2 Thess. 1:1-10</i> <i>Luke 12:13-15,</i> <i>22-31</i>	13 <i>2 Thess. 1:10-2:2</i> <i>Luke 12:42-48</i>	14 <i>2 Thess. 2:1-12</i> <i>Luke 12:48-59</i>	15 <i>2 Thess. 13:3-5</i> <i>Luke 13:1-9</i>	16 <i>2 Thess. 3:6-18</i> <i>Luke 13:31-35</i>	17 <i>Gal. 1:3-10</i> <i>Luke 9:37-43</i>
18 <i>Eph. 4:1-6</i> <i>Luke 10:25-37</i>	19 <i>~1 Tim. 1:1-7</i> <i>Luke 14:12-15</i>	20 <i>1 Tim. 1:8-14</i> <i>Luke 14:25-35</i>	21 <i>1 Tim. 1:18-20;</i> <i>2:8-15</i> <i>Luke 15:1-10</i>	22 <i>1 Tim. 3:1-13</i> <i>Luke 16:1-9</i>	23 <i>1 Tim. 4:4-8,16</i> <i>Luke 16:15-18;</i> <i>17:1-4</i>	24*** <i>Heb. 1:1-12</i> <i>Luke 2:1-20</i>
25**** <i>Eph. 5:9-19</i> <i>Luke 12:16-21</i>	26 <i>1 Tim. 5:1-10</i> <i>Luke 17:20-25</i>	27 <i>1 Tim. 5:11-21</i> <i>Luke 17:26-37</i>	28 <i>1 Tim. 5:22-6:11</i> <i>Luke 18:15-17,</i> <i>26-30</i>	29 <i>1 Tim. 6:17-21</i> <i>Luke 18:31-34</i>	30 <i>2 Tim. 1:1-2,8-18</i> <i>Luke 19:12-28</i>	31 <i>Gal. 5:22-6:2</i> <i>Luke 10:19-21</i>

\*St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

\*\*St. Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska

\*\*\*Eve of the Nativity of Christ

\*\*\*\*Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

NOTE: No fast from Dec. 25 through Dec. 31.

SPECIAL READINGS: 12-11, Luke 14:16-24 (Forefathers)  
12-18, Matt. 1:1-25 (Ancestors)

# DAILY GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READINGS FOR JANUARY 1984

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1* 2 Tim. 4:5-8 Col. 2:8-12 Mark 1:1-8 Luke 2:20-21, 40-52	2 2 Tim. 2:20-26 Luke 19:37-44	3 2 Tim. 3:16-4:4 Luke 19:45-48	4 2 Tim. 4:9-22 Luke 20:1-8	5 1 Cor. 9:19-27 Luke 3:1-18	6** Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7 Matt. 3:13-17	7 Eph. 6:10-17 Matt. 4:1-11
8 Eph. 4:7-13 Matt. 4:12-17	9 Heb. 3:5-11, 17-19 Luke 20:27-44	10 Heb. 4:1-13 Luke 21:12-19	11 Heb. 5:11-6:8 Luke 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24	12 Heb. 7:1-6 Luke 21:28-33	13 Heb. 7:18-25 Luke 21:37-22:8	14 Eph. 2:11-13 Luke 13:18-29
15 Col. 3:4-11 Luke 17:12-19	16 Heb. 8:7-13 Mark 8:11-21	17 Heb. 9:8-10, 15-23 Mark 8:22-26	18 Heb. 10:1-18 Mark 8:30-34	19 Heb. 10:35-11:7 Mark 9:10-16	20 Heb. 11:8, 11-16 Mark 9:33-41	21 Eph. 5:1-8 Luke 14:1-11
22 Col. 3:12-16 Luke 18:18-27	23 Heb. 11:17-23, 27-31 Mark 9:42-10:1	24 Heb. 12:25-26; 13:22-25 Mark 10:2-12	25 James 1:1-18 Mark 10:11-16	26 James 1:19-27 Mark 10:17-27	27 James 2:1-13 Mark 10:23-32	28 Col. 1:3-6 Luke 16:10-15
29 1 Tim. 1:15-17 Luke 18:35-43	30 James 2:14-26 Mark 10:46-52	31 James 3:1-10 Mark 11:11-23				

\*January 1: Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

\*\*January 6: Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ