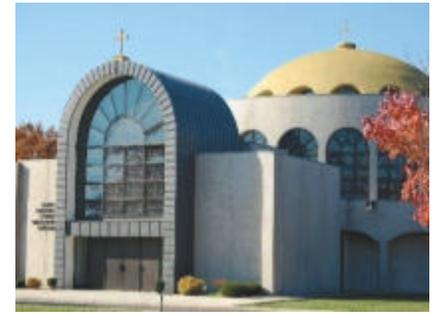


THE MESSAGE TO MHNYMA

December 2020 Newsletter



THE MAGI WERE TRULY WISE



The Wise Men did not argue with King Herod or tell him he was a liar and a hypocrite when he said he wanted to worship the baby Jesus. It was no use trying to reason with him. They simply heard him and left.

Sometimes it doesn't help to call a liar by that name knowing it will not lead him to acknowledge the fact and repent. Repentance and conversation, after all, are the final goals. If one knows that what he may say will not result in the conversion of the sinner but may have injurious results on others, it may be better not to say it.

What would it have accomplished if the Magi had chosen to argue with Herod? Would it have made Herod a true worshipper of Jesus? I doubt it. Would it have made it easier for them to accomplish their original purpose of finding the baby Jesus? Probably not. Perhaps it would have caused Herod to get angry and kill them instantly as he did his own wife and sons.

Truth is best defended when it advances rather than hurts God's kingdom.

Although the Magi could discern the hypocrisy of Herod, they were not afraid that in pursuing their goal of finding and worshipping the baby Jesus, their lives would be in danger. The prospect of possible persecution did not turn them aside from their original course for **"When they heard the king, they departed"** (Matthew 2:9). They would not allow anything to stand in the way.

Their determination to continue their search was made before the star reappeared in Jerusalem to guide them to Bethlehem. They determined to continue seeking the Lord Jesus, not because of the king's command, but in spite of it. Had they left Herod's palace seeking Jesus just because Herod so commanded them, I believe they would have never found Him. But they left eager to obey God who had led them from the very beginning. It was because they desired to obey God implicitly that, no sooner did they leave the palace, than the star reappeared in the sky. **"And behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy"** (Matthew 2:9-10). They recognized it. It was the same star they had seen in the East, and it was going before them.

Was it not possible that Herod and some of his men might also see the star and follow it or go in pursuit of the Magi? Could not Herod have sent secretly some armed people to kill the baby Jesus on arrival of the Magi? Yes, he could have.

But God does not always allow His enemies to do what they want, but only what will fit into His eternal plan. The same God who hindered Herod from following the Magi and killing Jesus as they arrived at Bethlehem was the same God who permitted him later on to murder the little innocent children of Bethlehem. However, the same God did not spare the Lord Jesus from the Cross.

I really believe that neither Herod nor any of his peers could discern the star guiding the Magi. That which God uses to guide seekers of truth usually has no meaning to His enemies.

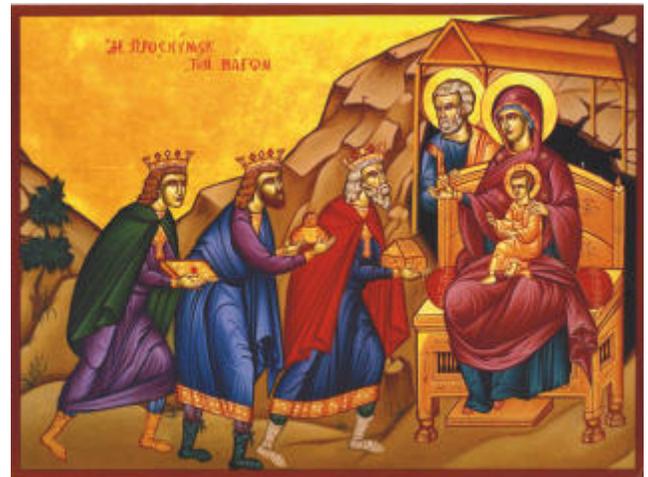
Perhaps in his vanity, King Herod not only wanted to kill Jesus but to make as big a demonstration out of it as he possibly could. Not even a little baby could be considered a potential king. This would show how powerful he was and be a warning to any other

Jewish leader seeking to revolt against the Romans. Nothing was beyond the vanity of Herod. In spite of his services in rebuilding the temple, he was so hated that there was none to mourn him when he died. In order that there might be weeping on the occasion of his death, he ordered his sister Salome to imprison the chief of the Jews in the Hippodrome and kill him. The order, however, was not carried out.

The insignificant place of Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus was known to God above, and He commanded the star to lead these Magi to Him. One thing is clear. God who started guiding the Magi by the star did not withdraw His guidance. He did not allow anyone in Jerusalem to tell the Magi where the baby Jesus was to be found. It was the work of God from beginning to end. He is so gracious. He understands and forgives us when in drowning we catch a straw thinking to can accomplish what we want. Let us learn a lesson from this. God's guidance fades whenever we depend on men to show us the way. He reappears when He sees that we acknowledge how futile has been the human help we sought. God saw the sincerity of the Magi's hearts, and this is what He wants to see in our hearts. What exceeding great joy there is in the realization that no matter how much we stumble and fumble, God is ready to resume the appearance of His star to lead us to that ultimate destination which we originally set out to reach.

My beloved brothers and sister, let the wisdom of the Wise Men be ours as well. Let us all be persistent in our search for Jesus and when we have found the Lord let us "worship and bow down before Him." Let us present ourselves and our gifts to Him not only on Christmas but every day we walk this earth. For unto all is born a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

✠ Fr. Ted



WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO US

Christ, the Son of God, who lived and died to show us God's love.
Hope, which is what we have in Christ, to face our daily trials.
Resurrection, which assures that Christ, lives today.
Immanuel, "God with us," who will never leave or forsake us.
Star, which shone bright to remind us that Christ lights the world.
The symbol of the cross, which is an undeniable part of Christmas.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!



“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:23)

We have missed seeing you at church during this COVID-19 pandemic crisis. We hope and pray that everything is well with you and your loved ones.

We as Orthodox Christians make up the Church, the Body of Christ. We belong to Him and to one another. As the Body of Christ, we experience the fullness of God’s love for us in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and partaking of the Eucharist. If you feel up to it, come and worship with us this Sunday and feel the fellowship, love, and saving grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If you are still leery because of the pandemic, feel free to follow our services on our Cathedral Facebook Page or our YouTube Channel. Orthros begins on Sundays at 8:00am and is followed immediately at 9:00am by the Divine Liturgy. We look forward to praying with you this week!

WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 6th, 13th, 20th & 27th: Orthros 8:00am & Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Wednesday, December 9th: *Conception of the Theotokos by St. Anna* - Orthros 8:00am & Divine Liturgy: 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Saturday, December 12th: *Feast Day of St. Spyridon the Wonderworker* - Orthros 8:00am & Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Tuesday, December 15th: *Feast Day of St. Eleutherios the Priest Martyr* - Orthros 8:00am & Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Thursday, December 24th: *Christmas Eve Morning* - Royal Hours: 9:00am in the Cathedral.

Christmas Eve Night - Vespers Liturgy: 6:30pm. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Friday, December 25th: *Christmas Day - Nativity of our Lord* - Orthros 8:00am & Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

For the safety and well being of our parishioners, clergy and staff, our parish will continue following the protocols set forth by CDC and the Metropolis of Chicago unless otherwise advised.

Remember, it is your choice whether you want to attend public worship. It is your choice whether you want to receive Holy Communion. If you feel uncomfortable about coming to church or in receiving Holy Communion, please refrain from doing so until you do feel comfortable. Worship Services will be lived streamed on our Facebook Page and YouTube Channel. Everyone is invited to join us!



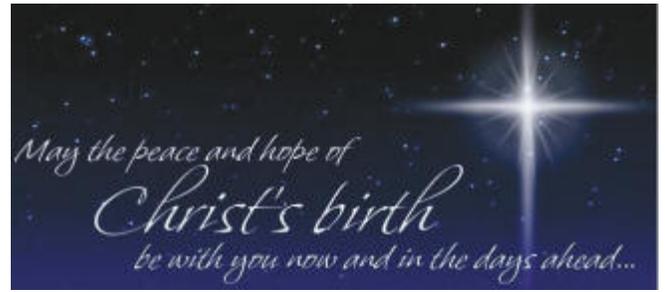
HOLY CONFESSION: “Now is the appointed time, in which you must confess your sins to God, and to the priest. By prayer and by fasting, by tears and by almsgiving, wipe them away. Why should a sinner be ashamed to make known his sins, since they are already known to God, and to His angels, and to the blessed ones in heaven? Confession delivers the soul from death. Confession opens the door to heaven. Confession brings us hope of salvation. It is because of this that the Scripture says: **‘First tell your iniquities in order that you may be justified’** (Isaiah 43:26). But confession made without

true repentance will not deliver you. For true repentance is grief of heart and sorrow of soul because of the evils a person has committed.”

- St. Ambrose

The Nativity Fast prepares the soul for the birth of Christ. This is an appropriate time for Orthodox faithful to participate in the Sacrament of Holy Confession. Appointments for Confession may be made by contacting Fr. Ted through the church office 219-769-2481.

A CHRISTIAN should live so that instead of being part of the world’s problems he/she will be a part of the answer.



FOR THIS NATIVITY SEASON, we here at Ss. Constantine and Helen would like to give all our Cathedral Family a gift of things to keep in mind that will help you keep your spirits high.

- The most destructive habit.....Worry
- The greatest loss.....Loss of self-respect
- The greatest joy.....Giving
- The most satisfying work.....Helping others
- The ugliest personality trait.....Selfishness
- The most endangered species.....Dedicated leaders
- Our greatest natural resource.....Our youth
- The greatest shot in the arm.....Encouragement
- The greatest problem to overcome.....Fear
- The most effective sleeping pill.....Peace of mind
- The most crippling failure disease.....Excuses
- The most powerful force in life.....Love
- The most dangerous pariah.....A gossip
- The world’s most incredible computer.....The brain
- The worst thing to do without.....Hope
- The deadliest weapon.....The tongue
- The two most powerful words.....I can
- The greatest asset.....Faith
- The most worthless emotion.....Self-pity
- The most beautiful attire.....Your Smile
- The most prized possession.....Integrity
- The most powerful channel of communication.....Prayer
- The most contagious spirit.....Enthusiasm



TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF SS. CONSTANTINE AND HELEN:

It is our prayer, to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Whose Birth we celebrate, that He may grant you all and your loved ones, length of days, with good health, peace, love, joy, prosperity and growth in faith.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

- Fr. Ted & Presvytera Tulla Poteres
- Fr. Dimitri & Presvytera Daniele Burikas
- Fr. William Conjelko
- Presvytera Kathy Pappas

CHRISTMAS IS ETERNAL: For many men and women in our world today, Christmas is only a swift light in the sky of our darkness, as momentary as the sound of a carol on a winter night. The Christmas tree withers, the gifts are put away, the songs of Christmas end, and they return to darkness. They let Christmas end, and they return to darkness. They forget that they can have Christmas in their hearts always. Christmas is an eternal fact of God. It means that we are now His children and that He came to live with us forever. May the joy of Christmas live in our hearts each day forever and ever.

BLESSED are they who see Christmas through the eyes of a child.

FALL MINI GREEK FEST A HUGE SUCCESS!



Our parish priests, Fr. Ted Poteres and Fr. Dimitri Burikas, Fall Greek Mini Fest Committee Chairmen Elias Ploutis and Taki Zarakas, and Council President John Petalas would like to express their sincere gratitude and THANKS to everyone: men and women, single and married, young and senior, parishioner and non-parishioner who cooperated and gave so unselfishly of their time and talent working so hard to make our Mini Fest a beneficial success for our Cathedral, especially during these trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Thank you to the few who make it possible for the many to enjoy the various ministries, programs and spiritual life of Ss. Constantine and Helen!**

GREEK FESTIVAL 2020 RAFFLE TICKET WINNERS

1 st Place	\$ 5,000	Ticket #0521	Mary Ann Drossos
2 nd Place	\$ 2,000	Ticket #0434	Martha Metts
3 rd Place	\$ 1,000	Ticket #3650	James F. Burns
4 th Place	\$ 500	Ticket #2495	Michael J. Troumouliaris
5 th Place	\$ 500	Ticket #1637	Bessie Naglosky
4 th Early Bird	\$ 250	Ticket #3368	Dean Christie
3 rd Early Bird	\$ 250	Ticket #0388	Kalioppe Dedelow
2 nd Early Bird	\$ 250	Ticket #1493	Pete Malouhos
1 st Early Bird	\$ 250	Ticket #0590	Nick Fitousis

Congratulations to all our winners! A very huge thank you to all who participated in this year's Raffle, either by selling or purchasing tickets. Special thanks to Dora Adams for chairing this fundraiser for our Greek Fall Mini Fest.

DECEMBER HEROES OF THE FAITH

ST. NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER



Perhaps no saint is as universally revered throughout Orthodoxy as St. Nicholas. This 4th century saint attained the lofty position of Archbishop of Myra in Lycia and was privileged to be numbered among the 318 hierarchs present at the 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

Despite his venerable accomplishments and achievements, St. Nicholas is best remembered for very simple and basic reasons. St. Nicholas did not leave us any theological works or scholarly writings as did many early Church Fathers. Instead, he left behind the image of a bishop who was personification of a shepherd. His entire life was dedicated in caring for his entrusted flock. Their needs were his concerns and numerous stories and legends speak of his acts of charity and generosity, which were always carried out in a Christ-like manner of humility and unselfishness.

The Troparion hymns to St. Nicholas praises him as "**.....a model of faith and an example of virtue.**" He is commemorated during this sacred season of Advent to remind us that we, too, must strive to be a similar "model" and "example" as we dedicate our lives to the One Who became incarnate for the sake of our salvation!

THE RIGHTEOUS JOSEPH GUARDIAN OF OUR LORD



God became Man in a miraculous way: INCARNATE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE VIRGIN MARY. An important part of our belief in the Virgin Birth, therefore, is our understanding that Christ had no earthly father.

There was, however, a "father figure" in His life: the Righteous Joseph. Joseph is somewhat of a mysterious character in the amazing drama of our Lord's birth. He was of the royal lineage of David, thus explaining the necessity for his return to Bethlehem to register for the census taken by Caesar Augustus. Despite his background, Joseph was a poor carpenter. Prior to his betrothal to Mary, Joseph may have been an older widower, with several children from his previous marriage. This is sometimes offered as a possible answer to scriptural questions concerning Jesus having brothers and sisters.

The Gospel lessons pertaining to Christ's Nativity provide us with some insight into the spiritual strength Joseph possessed. Although puzzled and confused when he discovered the Theotokos unexplainably being "with child," Joseph remained protective of her until an angel of God revealed the Divine Nature of the One she was carrying. He continued to provide for her safety and that of the infant Messiah, fleeing from Bethlehem to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod soon after the Child's birth. We know that Joseph, Mary and Jesus eventually settled in Nazareth, where Christ grew "in wisdom and stature" under the watchful eye of His Mother and His Guardian. Since there is no mention of him in the narratives of Christ's public ministry, it can be assumed that Joseph passed on prior to the beginning of the work of the One over Whom he watched so diligently.

PROTO-MARTYR & ARCHDEACON STEPHEN



St. Stephen was one of the seventy disciples of the Lord. After the Ascension, he was chosen to be one of the seven Deacons to minister to the needy of the Christian community. Stephen was a zealous and powerful preacher, and he made some of the Jews angry by his teaching about Jesus. The Book of Acts (chapters 6 & 7) of the Apostles tells the story of how Stephen was tried by the *Sanhedrin* (high priests) for blasphemy against Moses and God, as well as speaking against the Temple and the Law. He was stoned to death by an infuriated mob encouraged by Saul of Tarsus, the future Saint Paul: "**And Saul entirely approved of putting him to death**" (Acts 8:1). Stephen's final speech was presented as accusing the Jews of persecuting prophets who spoke out against their sins:

"Which one of the Prophets did your fathers not persecute, and they killed the ones who prophesied the coming of the Just One, of whom now, too, you have become betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52).

Saint Stephen's name is simply derived from the Greek "*Stephanos*," meaning "crown", which translated into Aramaic as "*Kelil*." Traditionally, Saint Stephen is invested with a *crown of martyrdom* for Christianity; he is often depicted in art with three stones and martyrs' palm. In iconography, he is shown as a young beardless man with a tonsure, wearing a deacon's vestments, and often holding a miniature church building or a censer.



**There is always something to be thankful for.
We are thankful for all our volunteers. God bless you all!**



Words cannot express our gratitude for the generous support on behalf of the Harvest for the Hungry Project. Even with the Covid-19 pandemic our parish was still able to provide between 3,500 – 4,000 people a Thanksgiving meal. Numerous volunteers offered their time and talent, as well as monetary or food item donations; along with kind, loving words of support for those we served.

This truly reflects the enthusiasm and love this parish has for our outreach programs. Our beloved Ss. Constantine and Helen truly is a "beacon of light during a storm" in our community of Northwest Indiana. May the good Lord continue to watch over and bless our Church family with compassion, health, love and strength to continue this amazing work!



"All shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that He has given you" (Deuteronomy 16:17).

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COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

ATTENTION



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our church office hours are from 9:00am to 3:00pm, Monday through Friday. The church office is closed on Saturday and Sunday. Please make a note of this.

Announcements for the Sunday bulletin and names to be commemorated for Memorials on Sunday need to be submitted to the church office by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Articles or announcements for the monthly newsletter "The Message" need to be submitted to Fr. Ted by the 1st of each month for the upcoming month (i.e. December 1st for January).

The church office will close at 12noon on December 24th & all day on Christmas, December 25th and January 1, 2021 for New Year's Day. Memorial names, reservations for worship and any announcements for the Sunday, December 27th bulletin must be submitted by Tuesday, December 22nd by 3:00pm and for the Sunday, January 3, 2021 bulletin by Tuesday, December 29th, 3:00pm.

ATTENTION PARISHIONERS: If you are planning to move to a new location, or if you have already moved, please inform the church office so that we may change our records. It costs our parish money for every piece of mail that is returned as "Address Change requested." PLEASE let the church office know of any changes to your address, home or cell phones, email address, etc. Your help in this matter is truly appreciated!

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: The monthly meeting of our Parish Council will be held on Thursday, December 17th at 7:00pm. All Parish Council members. please note that the meeting is being held one week earlier than usual because of Christmas.

PARISH COUNCIL OPENINGS: Due to two resignations from the Parish Council, there are two open seats available. Any parishioner 18 years or older in good standing with the church (canonically & financially) is welcomed to submit their name, co-sponsored by two parishioners, to Fr. Ted at the church office. We have been asking for months for our parishioners to help, and yet no one has responded! Please, for the love of our Lord and His Holy Church, won't someone give of their time and talent?

WEBSITE UPDATE: If you haven't looked lately at our Cathedral website, www.ssconstantineandhelen.org, you should. It has had a new make over and allows the viewer to gather information about our parish, as well as Metropolis and Archdiocese ministries and programs at a touch of a finger. We would like to thank Presvytera Kathy Pappas and Fr. Dimitri Burikas for their time and efforts in putting this together for our parish. We still are in need of a webmaster to update and keep our information current. If there is anyone interested in volunteering their time and talent for this ministry, please contact Fr. Dimitri through the church office.

HELPING HAND FUND: This fund was established to help families in our parish with financial hardships. Many of our very own require financial assistance during difficult times. It is a very comforting feeling knowing that you can go "home" and find help that is given freely and with love. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Fr. Ted at the church office 769-2481.

FOOD PANTRY: Our Cathedral Food Pantry, which is held each Friday from 9:00-11:00 a.m. is the core of our Outreach Program. Each week, numerous families and individuals come to us for assistance. Many of these families have four or more children. We try to provide the basic food stuffs for at least one week. With the holidays quickly approaching and the demand growing, our Food Pantry is in desperate need of help. Canned or dried food, personal hygiene items, as well as turkeys and hams are needed! Please continue to support the Food Pantry. Deadline for turkey and ham donations for Christmas is Monday, December 14th.

KIDS 4 KIDS TOY DRIVE: We will be in full force collecting new toys from November 1st to December 13th. We will be spreading Christmas cheer to some of our local extraordinary special needs kids and children in our local shelters. Once again we are requesting new, clean non-violent toys. Please NO stuffed animals. The toys may be brought on Sundays and placed in the bin, which will be located in the entrance (exonarthex) of the Cathedral or dropped off at the church office during the week. If there are any questions, please call Eva Kostides at 662-8370.

HOLIDAY LOVE AND CARE DRIVE: Even though our Sunday School is on break because of COVID-19, our parish will still be collecting mittens, gloves, hats and scarves for the needy of our area. Please bring in these items to the church office during the months of November and December as part of your almsgiving during the Nativity Fast.

PHILOTOCHOS NEWS

THE PHILOTOCHOS CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE will take place on Saturday, December 12th, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 13th, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 noon. Pre-orders are being accepted until Friday, December 4th. For more information or to place an order, call Frances Klimis 219-696-4851.

CHRISTMAS PARTY & MEETING UPDATE: Due to the new Covid-19 protocols issued by the State of Indiana the December 14th Philoptochos Christmas Party & Meeting has been cancelled.

PHILOTOCHOS MEMBERSHIP is ongoing throughout the year. Philoptochos needs YOU to fulfill its mission! You can support Philoptochos either as an active member or as a supportive member. For those too busy to attend a monthly meeting or be involved in any of its ministries or activities, your yearly \$30 or more membership is a meaningful way to participate and offer your assistance. Help us to help others by becoming a Philoptochos member of the largest Christian women's philanthropic organization in America!



St. Helen's Ladies Philoptochos Society

CHRISTMAS PASTRY FEST

Saturday, December 12
10 am - 1 pm

Sunday, December 13
10:30 am - 12 pm

Delicious Greek Pastries & Favorite Specialty Foods
Baklava * Koulourakia * Nut Tassies * Finikia * Diplos
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ORTHODOXY 101 - MISCONCEPTION ABOUT JESUS: There is a belief among some people that Jesus came into His existence with His birth in Bethlehem. This belief is an error.

In the Gospel of John 1:1-4 it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Also in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament we read "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...So God made man; in the image of God He made Him" (1:26-27).

Thus we see by these two biblical references that Jesus existed before Creation. Creation is the will of the Father, accomplished through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER: Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and the worship of the Wise Men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings and teach us to be joyful with clear hearts. Amen.

REMEMBER: JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY



HAVE YOU MADE YOUR STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE OF COMMITMENT TO OUR CATHEDRAL FOR 2021?

Another year will soon be upon us and again you are called upon to make your Commitment Pledge of Time, Talent and Treasure to God and His Church.

The Bible reminds us to **“Give, and it will be given to you”** (Luke 6:38). This verse is a true and sound one. For when we give abundantly we receive from God in the same measure.

On Christmas Day, we celebrate the greatest Gift of all – God’s gift of love, **“For 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). This passage is the essence of the gospel: God’s gift of His Son as the ultimate expression of His love for the world.

Every one of us continues to receive the unending blessings of our Lord. And one way to return His love is to care for His Church. Our House of Worship is our concern for it is here that we are spiritually nurtured and receive the redeeming grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Do you remember the healing of the Ten Lepers when only one, a Samaritan, returned to give thanks to Christ for making him whole again? **“Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?”** Jesus asked (Luke 17:17). The Good Lord knows as to who is thankful and who is not.

In November we began our Stewardship Campaign for 2021. Everyone on our membership list was mailed their 2021 Stewardship appeal letter and Pledge Form.

Our Cathedral Stewardship Program is easy and not complicated at all. It is a fair and just way for the young and elderly, the single or married, the well to do or those low income individuals, to freely and fairly give of the fair share of God’s blessings to the support of His Church. Give as you have been blessed!

Please be reminded that every one of our members is required by Archdiocese regulations to fill out and submit a new Pledge Form to the church office each year to be considered a financial steward in good standing. For accounting purposes, it is important that you use your new weekly envelopes so that your account may be credited with your donation for 2021. All members are asked to complete the full payment of their 2020 Pledge by no later than December 31, 2020.

We end the year with the celebration of God’s greatest Gift unto mankind; and you are asked to commence the New Year with your gift to God and His Church.

If you haven’t already – make your 2021 Pledge today!

To make giving easier for all our faithful, we have established an online program called [Tithe.ly/give](https://tithe.ly/give). This will allow those who have internet accessibility to continue to make offerings for stewardship payments, candles, Helping Hand, Food Pantry, Fall Greek Fest and other donations that help cover the costs of operating our parish with just a click of your computer keys. Look below and check out the link listed. It is a profession of faith when we all work together and help our church to better plan for its various financial needs and expenditures. Thank you!

<https://tithe.ly/give?c=1385847>



YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE: This year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reimagined our Sunday school to bring meaningful Christian ministry into your very own home. Introducing: *Faith Box*. Each month, families will have the opportunity to register to receive a box packed with activities, readings, discussion questions and games for the whole family! Families can pick up their box after church on Sunday or during the week and complete the different elements at their own pace. That way, everybody can have a few no-stress, faith-centered family nights each month focused on a particular Christian virtue. Just open the box, and the work is done! After the boxes have been distributed, we will have a live virtual workshop on the theme of the month. Have questions or want to register for the December box? Email Fr. Dimitri at frdimitri@ssconstantineandhelen.org or call the church office 219-769-2481.

YOUTH MEETING DATE: For the month of December GOYA, Jr. GOYA, HOPE & JOY will be meeting Monday, December 7th, 6:30-7:30pm. These programs are open to the youth of our parish. GOYA: 8th-12th grade; Jr. GOYA: 5th-7th grade; HOPE & JOY: Kindergarten-4th grade. We encourage all the young people of our community to take advantage of these ministries that allow you to meet other Orthodox Christians in a fun environment, as well as learn about our Orthodox Faith and yourselves through discussions, social events and service projects. Come on out and see! You will be glad you did!

For the safety and well being of our youth, clergy and advisors, the meetings will be held in separate areas of our Cathedral complex, everyone attending must wear a mask and the groups will not intermingle. We will be following the protocols set forth by CDC and the Metropolis of Chicago unless otherwise advised.



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MAGI OR HEROD?
Our Response to the Coming of Christ
By Fr. Dimitri Burikas

I like to think of the Christmas season as if it were a heavy wool sweater – warm and fuzzy. During this time of year, no matter where we turn to look we are flooded with messages of peace, joy, and love and many other things that elicit pleasant emotional reactions. Families and friends gather and exchange gifts, delicious meals are prepared, Christmas carols are sung, people generously offer from their own means to help those less fortunate. It's the one time of year when the warm-and-fuzzies are present so explicitly in our society.

In our Church, of course, those sentiments are also present. We celebrate the birth of Christ and the coming of the God-man as an event that changes human history forever: man is reunited to God and can once again dream of and work for the Kingdom of Heaven. Sins are forgiven; grace is given in its place. Angels sing and shepherds worship. The magi come from far-off lands to bring gifts to the newborn king.

We, Christians living in the 21st century, are also called to take part in the celebration, not only by eating and singing and gift-giving but by opening our hearts to Christ that He may be born within us. Just as the Virgin carries and gives birth to Christ into the world, so we have the opportunity to carry Christ and have Him with us in our hearts. Just as the birth of Christ changes human history, so too will Christ's birth within our hearts transform us with the purpose of uniting us to the divine. When we experience God's blessings in such a personal and meaningful way, our hearts cry out to glorify Him!

But for all the warm-and-fuzzies that surround us during the Christmas season, the Church reminds us also of another reality. In the Scriptures, we read that after the birth of Christ, the Roman king Herod sends the magi (wise men) to Bethlehem to find the Christ child and bring word to him so that he also can go and worship. The wise men were warned that Herod had ulterior motives and never returned to Herod. Enraged, Herod orders that all male children in the area be slaughtered with the goal of finding the so-called "newborn king". In all, Herod kills 14,000 children, known in our Church as the Holy Innocents.

We see in this episode a different reaction to the coming of Christ. Instead of peace, love and joy, Herod was filled with violence, hatred, and anger. Because of this, Joseph and Mary hide baby Jesus in Egypt until Herod is dead, and even then move to Nazareth (which did not have a great reputation at the time) to stay hidden.

The violence against Christ and His followers did not end there, as we know. Due to His teachings and miracles, Christ Himself was arrested and crucified. After His Resurrection, His Apostles were persecuted and martyred (except for St. John the Theologian, who survived being poisoned before being exiled and dying in old age). For almost three centuries, Christians at large were hunted down and killed. Even in modern times, millions of Christians were killed in the communist Soviet Union (in the 20th century!), and Muslim extremists in the Middle East target Christian churches and gatherings quite often.

Why does Jesus Christ procure such a negative and oftentimes violent response? Christ came into the world and taught a new way of doing things, a new way of life. He taught to show love to our enemies. He taught mercy instead of justice. He taught us to follow God by not only following His rules but by loving Him in our hearts, by sacrificing ourselves for Him. He taught us that He was the Son of God, and that if we follow Him we can have eternal life.

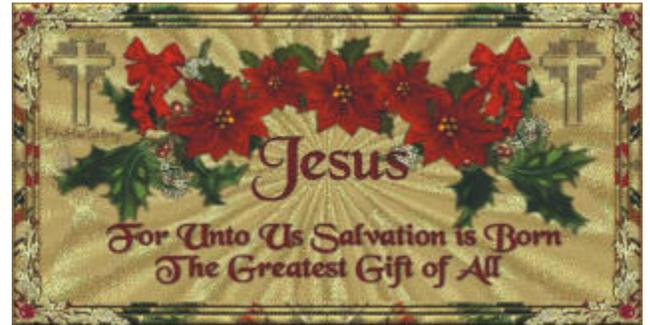
This worldview challenges, in many ways, the comfortable world we live in. It's much easier to ignore a person you disagree with or call someone a bigot through social media than it is to show them love. It is much easier to breed anger in our hearts towards someone who has wronged us than it is to forgive. It is much easier to buy and collect material things for our own pleasure than it is to give to the point where we are in pain. It is much easier to worship God on Sunday mornings only than it is to love Him with our whole life.

The challenge of authentic Christianity pushes us to uncomfortable places; thus, the negative reaction of the world. But where we can't get trapped is in thinking that we accept Christ and His Gospel when really we are rejecting Him in our hearts. This type of negative reaction is much more subtle than 20 centuries of bloodshed, but it is even more devastating.

The Christmas season, then, is the perfect time for self-reflection and investigation. Am I following Christ to the best of my abilities? Do I honor Him above all else in my life? Do I follow His commandments? Do I love my fellow humans as I love myself? Do I repent when I fall into sin? Or do I put on the disguise of a Christian and reject His way in my heart? Am I one of the magi, or am I following in Herod's footsteps?

Not only is Christmas a great time for self-investigation, but it is also a time to be inspired and reenergized for the long, hard grind of the Christian life. Even though Christ and His Church has been persecuted from its very beginning, it has survived and thrives. The message of God's goodness and love towards us has spread throughout the entire world. God still gives us the ability to approach Him and get to know Him, to love Him and become one with Him. After all, this was the whole point of Christmas in the first place!

I pray that God bless all of you throughout this Christmas fast and festival period with self-knowledge, repentance, and enlightenment to help us on our road to the Kingdom.



In the end of the year there is much celebration for Christmas and of the ringing in of the New Year. For parish finances however, this time of the year marks the "Moment of Truth," especially this year with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Did you ever consider that 99 out of 100 churches DO NOT take in 1/12th of their income each month during a normal year? Indeed there are the lean months of winter and summer. And there are seasons of more activity and more income like Lent, Easter, and Christmas.

But Christmas coming in the end of the year ushers in the "Moment of Truth" for many churches. A most generous Christmas Offering, and the payment in full of all Stewardship Pledges, is the only way under the sun that your home parish can end the year meeting its financial obligations.

We hope that you will give careful and prayerful consideration to these facts. We also trust that in your holiday giving you will place the church HIGH on your list of priorities. DO be unusually generous in your Christmas Offering this year. May the dear Lord bless you and yours always!

CHURCH FATHERS SPEAK: Seek to distinguish yourself from others only by your generosity. Be like gods for the poor, imitating God's mercy. Humanity has nothing so much in common with God as the ability to do good.
-St. Gregory Nazianzen