



Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos Missionary Parish, Orange County, California

CHURCH NEWSLETTER

January – March 2012

Parish Center Location: 2148 Michelson Drive (Irvine Corporate Park), Irvine, CA 92612
Fr. Blasko Paraklis, Parish Priest, (949) 830-5480 • David Williams, Parish Board President, (714) 907 - 6662

Learn from me A Nativity reflection on the humility of Christ

By Fr. Vasile

It's best for a man to become a clay vessel, which is useful to all people and for all kinds of daily work, for food, water, and so on. But golden vessels are put in safes and locked up in cupboards. For fear of thieves they are seldom used, maybe only once a year. A clay vessel has its daily use and service to man. So also is a humble man who does not seek honors and rank. He remains insignificant even amid men of lower rank, but he benefits, counsels, and

helps everyone, and all seek him out and rejoice with him. Humility is a great gift to monks and all Christians!" (Elder Paisios from Shila, Romania)

As we approach the great Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, the greatest act of humility that the entire cosmos has ever seen, it is only proper to speak about this great virtue in the hope that some will take heart from the words and advance in the practice of it in their Christian lives.

Humility is not



something Christians own in exclusivity. Even the pagan religions and the philosophers recognize the great benefit of meekness and have the concept embedded in their worldview; there is no place however that cherishes and fosters humility more than Christianity. The Old and the New Testament, the writings of the Holy Fathers, the Church dogmas and practice are profoundly soaked in this noble virtue.

The reason for this central place is that God Himself is the first One, not only to teach, but also to act in humility. Here is what St. Isaac the Syrian writes: *"Humility is God's robe. The Word who became human clothed himself with humility, and spoke with us in our human body."* What greater proof we can ask other than the fact that the Creator of the world, the Unoriginate, the Almighty, the One Who deserves all the glory and praise, would put aside all of it, leave the heavens and become earth to save us sinners, undeserving as we are? There is nothing to match this act and is the very reason why humility and not pride, for our achievements, material or spiritual, should guide our lives.

Pride is the very opposite of humility; is to take pleasure in being praised, to have your accomplish-

ments recognized: your talents, your beauty, your intelligence, your heritage. Pride is to say aloud: I did it, I deserve it all! Recognize me! About this Jesus Christ says: *"So when you give to the needy, do not*

announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full" (Mathew 6:2).

The proud way is a faulted way of thinking because we cannot take credit for any of it. God has, after all, fashioned us and gave us all we possess; we are who we are because of the gifts we have freely received. Any good thing that we do has its roots into our godly origin. Forgetting this is to forget about God Himself.

A proud person will ceaselessly push out of his life anything that competes with him and his great achievements. Without realizing it he chases away everyone, including God, and he finds himself isolated in an ivory tower of self-righteousness. He sits there by himself unwilling and, after a certain point, incapable of any progress. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* (Proverbs 1:7) The proud, even if he expresses exterior piety, is as far from God as the



earth it is from heaven. Any day a repenting publican enters the kingdom ahead of a proud Pharisee.

Humility on the other hand is a permanent remembrance of God, is to recognize God's presence in every aspect of our lives. The humble cries out with the King and Prophet David *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."* (Psalms 138: 7-11)

Recognizing God's presence in our lives is to be in communion with Him, is to receive His grace, is to let oneself guided by the Spirit of Truth and not by the spirit of the world. Humility brings spiritual dimension in our lives and restores everything in its proper place. Humility is the fulfillment of mankind's potential that was lost through the pride of our Forefathers in paradise.



Humility brings all together in communion while pride separates us from one another. The Holy Apostle Paul observes this when writing to the Philippians: *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,*



not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4)

This is the ultimate role of humility: to unite people, to make them one with each other and together with God *"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one-I in them and you in me-so that they may be brought to complete unity."* (John 17:22-23)

God comes at Nativity and receives our flesh so He can change us into something better. As St. Athanasius puts it: *"God becomes Man so man can become god."* He wants to lift the course of pride and sin and replace it with humility and virtue. He invites all to follow His lead into heavens: *"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matthew 11:29.)

At this festive time I wish everyone of you to rejoice in brotherly love, together receiving the great gift of the Incarnation of our Lord. Let the humble infant that is born in the manger of Bethlehem grow inside of us until it reaches the *"whole measure of the fullness of Christ"*.

May He be glorified to the ages with His Unoriginate Father and the All Holy Spirit.

Мир Божји, Христос се роди!

The Peace of God! Christ is Born!



Као што су у време Рођења Христовог свети Ангели Витлејемским пастирима благовестили *Радосћ велику и Славу Божију и Мир на земљи и Добру вољу међу људима*, јер се роду људском и свему свету родио „*Сјас, Коју је Христос Госџог*“ (Лк 2,10–14), тако и ми данас делимо и благовестимо исту *Радосћ велику Славе Божије и људске*, исти *Мир Божији и људски*, исту *Добру вољу Божију и људску*.

Божји је, по речима Светих Пророка, Апостола и Отаца Цркве наше, радосно засијао, и непрекидно до данас сија, као Вечно Пролеће васцелој васељени, јер на људе, и сву творевину, као физичко сунце у пролеће, Божић повраћа истинском обновљењу и новоме, вечноме животу.

Од Божића, **Бог је с нама** у нашој људској природи и у свеукупној природи око нас. Није укинуо ни разорио нашу природу, и свеукупну природу на Земљи и у свемиру, него их је обновио и у бесмртност позвао, јер је Он њен Творац и Промислитељ природе, Спаситељ и Осмислитељ човека и свемира. Господ Христос је Својим Оваплоћењем у чове-

Јust as the holy angels proclaimed the glad tidings of *great Joy, Glory to God and Peace on earth and Good Will towards men* to the shepherds of Bethlehem on the day of Christ's birth, **since the “Savior, Who is Christ the Lord”** (Luke 2:10-14) was born to all humanity, so today we also proclaim dear Brothers and Sisters the Glad Tidings of that same great *Joy* of the *Glory* of God and mankind, that same *Peace* of God and of mankind, that same *Good Will* to God and to mankind.

According to the prophets, apostles and fathers of our church, Christmas has been joyously planted from that time to today as the eternal springtime of all creation. Like the physical sun in spring, Christmas brings a true renewal and eternal life to us and to all creation.

Because of Christmas, **God is with us** in our human nature and in all of nature around us. He neither abolished nor destroyed our human nature nor nature in general; rather, He renewed them and called all to immortality. Because He is nature's creator, the Savior and Justifier of mankind and of the whole world, Christ the Lord, by His incarnation as a man, that is, by His be-

ка, то јест Својим Очовечењем, уздигао Човека и изнад Анђела и Арханђела, зато што је Бог Творац тако хтео и тако благоизволео – из неизрециве љубави Своје и човекољубља према човеку и роду људском – да човек буде и остане најмилије створење и средиште Љубави Божије, у Сину Љубљеном и Оваплоћеном. Зато је Божић за нас хришћане истинско и вечно Пролеће, пролеће непролазне Радости и вечне Слободе, спасоносне Љубави и вечнога Живота.

Стога, ово је догађај који не можемо да искуси-мо и доживимо из даљине, изван себе. Ово је догађај који искључиво можемо да доживимо у себи, својој људској природи у којој се родио сам Христос Бог.

Ову свесвету богочовечанску *ѿајну* – *догађај*, ово јединствено *небоземно чудо* – *стварности* Христа као Цркве и нас у Христу – Цркви, осећа и доживљава свако истинско људско срце данас на Божић.

Останимо са вером живом и истинитом, усправно стојећи о Божићу и ради Божића, срца пастирски отворенога и анђелски и детиње радоснога.

Мир Божји, Христос се роди! Срећан Божић и благословену Нову 2012. годину жели вам ваш молитвеник пред Богомладенцем Христом,

О. Блашко Параклис

coming man, exalted man above the angels and arch-angels. This is what God the Creator ordained—out of His inexpressible love for mankind—that man should be His most beloved creation, the focus of His love, expressed in His beloved, incarnate Son. This is why Christmas is for us Christians the true and eternal springtime, the springtime of eternal joy, freedom, love and life.

Therefore, this is not an event which we can witness from afar, outside of ourselves. This is an event which we must experience within our very depths, for it is there, precisely there, that Christ God chose to be born.

Today on Christmas, every true human heart experiences this all-holy *mysterious event*, this unique *heavenly miraculous reality*.

Let us abide with true and living faith as we celebrate Christmas with the open hearts of the shepherds and the joyful hearts of the angels and children.

In the name of that love for God and man, I joyfully greet you all: **Christ is born! Glorify Him!**

I also take this opportunity to wish you and yours Happy New Year!

Your intercessor before the Christ God,

Fr. Blasko Paraklis

CHRISTMAS GIFT

NAME / IN NAME OF: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY / STATE: _____ ZIP _____

Christmas Donation \$ _____

Make your check payable to: Most Holy Theotokos Church

Please Mail to: 2148 Michelson Drive

Irvine, CA 92612

THANK YOU

Past Events:

Parish Slava

By Marie Grubisha Wilkie

This year the annual celebration of the slava for the Most Holy Theotokos Church in Irvine, California had a special significance for the parishioners, beyond the usual festive events. His Grace, Bishop Maxim, conducted the liturgy to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, along with Fr Michael Lafoon (Antiochian jurisdiction), Fr. Stevan Kovacevic, Hieromonk Fr. Jovan Babic, Deacon Thomas Braun, and Fr. Blasko Paraklis, the parish priest.

The church was transformed for the occasion by the recent addition of an iconostasis that was donated by a parishioner, Marie Wilkie in memory of her aunt, Milica Arter, who was one of the earliest parishioners when the Most Holy Theotokos Church was first established. Millie, a long-time resident of Orange County for 50 years. Was the last surviving

member of the Voyvodic family of Goodrich, Michigan. She was the sixth of seven children born to Stevo and Yelena Voyvodic, who emigrated to the US from Serbia around 1910. Millie passed away in 2008 at the age of 92. When she was two years old she was stricken with polio, but she survived this debilitating disease, although it left her unable to walk without the use of crutches and a wheelchair for the rest of her long life. She was an extraordinary woman who overcame many challenges due to her handicap, determined not to live her life as an invalid dependent on others because of it. She learned to drive a car fitted with hand controls, and held various jobs as a typist, relishing her independence. Millie was a very devout practitioner of Serbian Orthodoxy, proud of her Serbian heritage. She would have been so pleased that this iconostasis will serve as her legacy to the





church that has sustained her and guided her spiritually throughout her life.

The iconostasis was constructed, and beautifully hand-carved, in Serbia from solid light oak wood. It is adorned with eight full-length, life-size icons of saints, painted on metallic gold panels, that were also done in Serbia by the renowned iconographer in Belgrade, Miloje Milinkovic. This magnificent work of art was consecrated in a blessing ceremony by His Grace, Bishop Maxim, during the liturgy service. A bishop's throne and a chantor's stand also carved in light oak wood to match the iconostasis, complete a trilogy of artistic additions to the church that has transformed the church into a truly Orthodox place of worship to glorify God, the Most Holy Theotokos and all the Saints.

The church choir, directed by Gorjana Zekic, made the divine liturgy a glorious celebration for this slava. The liturgy service was followed by a banquet in the church hall that was filled to capacity by the parishioners and guests. A wide selection of good



home-made food, a further performance from the church choir, followed by lively accordion music by *Vladan Beljic*, amid an ambiance of good fellowship and camaraderie amongst the guests provided a fitting ending to the festivities for this church slava.

The presence of the visiting myrrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God of Iveron, from Hawaii, which was on display in the church for the two days of the slava celebration, attracted several hundred visitors from other area Orthodox parishes, adding to the spirituality of the celebration. Following the banquet, a short Akathist service was conducted to bid farewell to this extraordinary icon as it continued its



journey to other sites in the U.S. Each of the visitors who came to view it was anointed with the scented myrrh collected from the streaming glass surface of the icon, as they paid reverence to it. It was a fortuitous circumstance that the presence of this blessed icon of the Holy Theotokos coincided with the slava celebration that glorifies her name. After the departure of the Iveron icon, a rather unusual phenomenon was noted during the cleaning up process in the church at the day's end. The church's own icon of the Holy Theotokos, which had been set aside so that the Iveron icon could be displayed on its pedestal during the visit, was replaced on its pedestal, and, to the amazement of everyone present, they saw that droplets of myrrh had formed and continued to accumulate on the image of the Theotokos, but, *inside* the sealed glass surface!

This was indeed a noteworthy and memorable Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos this year for the parishioners of the Most Holy Theotokos Serbian Orthodox Parish!

Serbian Greek Night

Established originally as a way to thank the Greek community for its support during the US/NATO bombing of Serbia, this Friendship Night has become a tradition in Orange County. It offers both an opportunity for inter-Orthodox fellowship and fundraising for the Serbian parish which is striving to buy property and build religious and cultural center.

Over 250 people filled to capacity the social hall of Holy Assumption's Greek Orthodox Church in Long Beach, California. Both Father John, the Greek parish priest, and Fr. Blasko, Serbian parish priest, of-

fered warm greetings and sincere gratitude to all those present. The attendees enjoyed a traditional Serbian and Greek food prepared by the dedicated and hard-working ladies of our and Greek parish KSS. To add to the festivities, Special guest Katerina Visnjic with her Orchestra played Serbian and Greek lively music.

The crowd excitedly welcomed Serbian Greek singer Katerina Visnjic and the Orchestra. Thanks to their wonderful performance as well as the hard work of the many volunteers the evening was spectacular and profitable.







Plan Ahead: PARISH BOARD ELECTIONS

Elections for the 2012 Parish Board will be held at our Annual Meeting on February 19, 2012.

Who is eligible to serve on the Parish Board?

The baptized Orthodox Christian, man or woman, who is a practicing member of the faith, participates in the sacramental life of the Church faithfully, who seeks to live his or her life fully in accordance with the Gospel and the canons of the Church and has been a member of the parish prior to elections.

We have a strong and active Board today, who fairly share the responsibilities so that none have any unreasonable burden. We are recruiting interested and active Board members as we pursue our long-term plans. If you would like to serve Christ and His church by serving on the Parish Board, please contact David Williams, Board President, any member of the current Board, or our Parish Priest, Fr. Blasko Paraklis.

THE ORTHODOX VIEW ON STEWARDSHIP

“How will we repay the Lord for all that He has given us?”

St. Basil the Great

Sacrificial giving and giving in proportion to what we have received from God leads us toward the concept of tithing. In the minds of most, this means offering ten percent of our gross revenue to the glory of God. Parishes and individual Orthodox Christians who commit to begin this journey need not focus heavily on the word “tithing” or on the ten percent of giving right from the start. While it is clear to many that this is what the Bible and the Church tradition teaches, thinking in terms of a percentage and giving 1% or 2% or 5% as a first step will mark an important break from the patterns of giving so common in many parishes.

The first step in this process, however, must be to recognize that faith-based giving is the desired goal. The patterns of giving followed by so many for years and years, while well-intentioned and based on faithful devotion, need to be changed if our churches are to grow and progress to their full potential. The time to start is now and the way to start is to launch an open-minded, patient, and loving look at what has motivated other Christians and our past practices. Comparing these findings to what is really prescribed in the Bible, will reveal the path we need to begin following. May God be with you on your journey.

2012 Stewardship Pledge Form

This commitment I

make to secure a Christ-

centered life for myself

and my family.

...to return to God the

first fruits from the gifts

He has bestowed upon me.

...to assist my Lord in

the mission of spreading

His Gospel.

...to anchor my personal

commitment in

Christ, and to do my

share in serving **His people.**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

TELEPHONE _____

I COMMIT MYSELF TO CHRIST AND HIS

CHURCH THROUGH THIS PLEDGE.

TOTAL PLEDGE FOR 2012: \$ _____

To be paid: ____ weekly ____ monthly ____ quarterly ____ in full

SIGNED _____

DATE _____

Schedule of Services

The Divine Liturgy is served regularly at 10:00 am every Sunday and on major Feast days at our Parish Center at Irvine Corporate Park, 2148 Michelson Drive, Irvine.

10:00 am: *Divine Liturgy*

11:30 am: *Sunday School*

12:00 pm: *Lunch*

Vespers service followed by the Sacrament of Holy Confession will be served every Saturday @ 5:00 p.m. and on the eve of major Feast days at 7:00 p.m.

Akathist Service to the Mother of God is served on Fridays at 7:00 PM

JANUARY 6th

БАДЊЕ ВЕЧЕ - CHRISTMAS EVE

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am.

Nativity Vigil at 7:00 pm.

Log Ceremony and Lenten Dinner following church services (Освећење бадњака и вечера после вечерње службе) Parents, please arrive with your children no later than 6:00 pm.

JANUARY 7th

BOZIC - NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

JESUS CHRIST - CHRISTMAS

Festive Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am. and Christmas lunch following. No charge for lunch, Donations only.

JANUARY 8th

Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos

– Divine Liturgy 10:00 am.

JANUARY 9th

St. Stephen the First Archdeacon and Martyr

– Divine Liturgy 10:00 am.

JANUARY 13th

SERBIAN NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

Serbian New Year's celebration will be held at our Church facility. See enclosed flyer!

JANUARY 14th

St. Basil the Great – New Year's Day

– Divine Liturgy 10:00 am.

NO FASTING FROM JANUARY 7TH THROUGH AND INCLUDING JANUARY 17TH

In celebration of Christmas we do not fast at all (even on Wednesdays and Fridays) from January 7 through and including January 17. On January 18, however, we fast rigorously (no meat/poultry, dairy products/eggs or fish) in preparation for the Feast of Epiphany on January 19th.

JANUARY 18th

Theophany Eve – Крстовдан Divine Liturgy & Great Blessing of Water 10:00 am.

Bring your empty bottles for holy water.

JANUARY 19th

Theophany – Богојављење.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 am. Followed by Great blessing of Water.

JANUARY 20th

St. John the Baptist – Divine Liturgy 10:00 am.

ОСВЕЋЕЊЕ ВОДИЦОМ – EPIPHANY HOME BLESSINGS TO BEGIN JANUARY 18

We begin this new year with a great joy. Joy for the growth and stability of our beloved parish. Joy for our brotherhood in Christ in His Holy Church. As such, we should manifest that joy by asking for His blessings each year. A way to concretely ask for such a blessing is to have our homes blessed each year by a priest.

This is long-standing tradition in the Orthodox Church. Each year after the Feast of Theophany, we schedule the blessing of homes. The priest performs a short service and goes to every room in the house, sprinkling each room with the Holy Water that was blessed at the Theophany service or at home. The priest also prays for all those in the house. It is a beautiful custom that not only asks God for the blessing of the upcoming year but allows the priest to see each of the families in the parish. As the Evangelist John the Theologian writes, *"I know My Sheep and am known by my own."* (John 10:14) The priest must know those people in his parish so that he can better serve them.

So my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, schedule a home blessing after the feast of Theophany. I have been

in the parish for quite a few years and am yet to visit some of your homes. We should have our houses blessed every year. An it would be a great joy for me as your priest to do so and thank you in person for all of your love and support for my family and myself. I wish all of you a prosperous and peaceful new year and again thank you for your love and support.

PREPARATION FOR ST. SAVA PROGRAM If you want your child to participate in the St. Sava program, please contact the priest @ 949 830-5480 All children who are participating in the St. Sava program must practice the poems at home and attend rehearsals.

JANUARY 27th

ST. SAVA

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

JANUARY 29th

ST. SAVA OBSERVANCE

We shall hold our St. Sava celebration on Sunday, January 29th. The Divine Liturgy as usual will start at 10:00 am. Banquet and children's program will follow Divine Liturgy. If you want your child to participate in St. Sava's children program please contact me via email OBasko@aol.com or @ 949 830-5480 as soon as possible.

FEBRUARY 12th

САБОР СВ. ТРИ ЈЕРАРХА

- SYNAXIS OF THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS

Св. Литургија почеће у 10:00 часова пре подне.

Holy Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 am.

FEBRUARY 15th

СПЕТЕЊЕ ГОСПОДЊЕ – MEETING OF OUR LORD

JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE – Presentation.

Св. Литургија почеће у 10:00 часова пре подне.

Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 am.

FEBRUARY 18th

Задушнице Saturday Div. Liturgy @ 10:00 am.

MARCH 22, “Младенци” Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

GREAT LENT

**Great Lent starts on Monday, February 27th,
and will end on Paschal Sunday, April 15th**

What Should I Do During Lent?

Most of us realize that prayer, fasting and almsgiving are three basic Christian and Lenten necessities. However, we often realize as well that we cannot keep the strictest Lenten regulation of the Church. So we sometimes feel frustrated, lost and without guidance.

When asking practical advice concerning Lenten practices, the only realistic guideline is to do the best you can. You know that the essentials are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Intensify your prayer, Fast as fully as possible. Give to others, asking nothing in return. Know as well that all of your prayer, fasting, and almsgiving must be exercised without boasting. The true purpose and goal of Great Lent is to enter into a deeper love for God and for those around us.

Another concrete yet traditional suggestion is to keep certain Lenten weeks in stricter and more devoted way than others. For example, the first and third weeks of Great Lent, in addition to Holy Week, can be set aside for a greater more concentrated effort.

Practically speaking, everyone can keep certain weeks, or at least one week, in a very special way. If this is done, there is no doubt that the result will be very positive, and the time spent may prove to be the most inspiring and fruitful time of our entire life. We can only try and see! Here are some concrete guidelines for making Great Lent more fulfilling and spiritually rewarding.

Receive Holy Communion regularly.

Attend the Sacrament of Repentance with sincerity and thoroughness.

Turn off the television, radio, and stereo for the entire Lenten season, except for news and serious programs. Do not visit or engage in outside activities for their own sake. Keep useless talking to a minimum. Do only necessary business, good works, and acts of charity. Examine and measure every aspect of your life – family, work, society, politics, economics, values, desires, etc. – against a model set forth by the life and teachings of Christ.

Question yourself in regard to love, truth, honesty, purity, humility, peace, forgiveness, justice, mercy, hungering & thirsting for God, wisdom and knowledge.

In the name of Christ, forgive all who have offended you and seek forgiveness from those whom you have offended. If it will not be embarrassing or misinterpreted as an act of self-righteousness, express yourself as concretely as possible. Visit, make a phone call, etc.

Set aside and give a sizable portion of your resources to others – the church, the poor, a social or educational agency. Tell no one what you have done. Ask no gratitude and forgo requesting a receipt (except for tax reasons) Do not advertise what you are doing.

Try to set aside the price of one meal each week to give to poor. Take the extra money saved from fasting and donate it to those who are in need.

Fast the entire Lenten season. No meat, eggs and dairy products. Suit your fast to your work, but avoid luxury. Again, tell no one. Do not advertise or discuss your fasting with anyone and avoid judging others who may not be fasting.

Pray at home at least one fixed time a day. Choose a brief rule of prayer, but keep it faithfully.

Read the Scriptures in the same brief yet regular way. You may wish to follow the Church's calendar, read a chapter of a given book on a daily basis, or simply read and reflect on passages which you happen on. In addition, meditate on the following: 1 John; Romans 12-14; Mathew 5 -7; and John 14-17.

Be faithful to Christ's Gospel in every word, action and thought – even the smallest and most significant.

Participate in all of the weekly Lenten services, especially the Liturgies, Akathist, and Vigils.

If we do all these things, not in a spirit of gloomy self-denial or irritated self-pity, we will gain an awareness of genuine peace and joy in communion with God and those around us. This is guaranteed – and our participation in and celebration of the Feast of Our Lord's Resurrection will be more cherished.

The Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts will be served on Wednesdays and Fridays during Lenten Season. The Presanctified Divine Liturgy will be served on Wednesdays at 5:00 AM and on Fridays at 10:00AM. The Great Cannon of St. Andrew will be served every evening during the First week of Lent at 7:00 PM.

FEBRUARY 19, 2012, 12:30 pm

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

You are hereby invited to attend the Annual Meeting of our Parish, which will be held at our Parish Center, 2148 Michelson Dr., Irvine, California, on Sunday, February 19th, 2012, following the Divine Liturgy and lunch. It is imperative that all of our faithful attend this meeting to discuss the many important matters about the future of our Parish. The Parish Board will present the financial

statement for 2011, and a budget proposal for 2012. Please invite the people you know to join you. Also, it is essential that you submit your *Parishioner Application* and *Stewardship Pledge* Forms before the meeting to become a member in good standing. If you do not have these Forms, please contact Fr. Blasko @ (949) 830-5480. In anticipation of your presence at this meeting, we remain,

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Blasko Paraklis, Parish Priest
David Williams, President

FOOD COLLECTION PROJECT FOR HOMELESS AT OUR PARISH

Our Parish has sponsored an independent homeless project every Sunday. We collect any food, fresh or canned, which we ask you place on the table located in the kitchen. We gather all your donations along with the left-overs from our parish meals and the change from the collection box on the same table, and donate it all to the Salvation Army Shelter located in our neighborhood. We urge you to leave food each week on that table. If you would like to help deliver it to the shelter, please tell Fr. Blasko, Danijela or Sanja. It is such a great help. Check your fridge and cupboards before coming to Church on Sundays and bring whatever you possibly can donate.

CARPOOL NEEDED FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

In our Parish we have a few elderly people who cannot drive to Divine Liturgies on Sundays. We need volunteers to take turns and bring our senior citizens to church. If you know any other elderly or disabled person who is in such need or any other kind of need, please contact Fr. Blasko immediately at (949) 830-5480.

OFFERINGS of wine for Holy Communion, oil for the vigil lamps, candles for the Holy Altar table, and incense for services may be made by contacting the parish priest. The customary donations are as follow: for vigil lamps, \$20.00; wine, \$10.00 per bottle or \$65.00 per case; candles for the Holy Altar, \$30.00; and incense, \$40.00

Митрополит Иоанн (Снычев).

Проповедь. 1962-1969

ДА ТОРЖЕСТВУЕТ ЗЕМЛЯ! (На Рождество Христово) Во имя Отца и Сына и Святаго Духа! Небо и земля, днесь пророчески да возвеселятся,

Ангелы и человецы духовно да торжествуют: яко Бог во плоти явился сущим во седящим.

Такими словами, братья и сестры, всех призывает Церковь в своих песнопениях торжествовать и ликовать в светлый и радостный день Рождества Христова.

О небо и земля! Внимайте гласу Церкви, внимайте и веселитесь согласно сказанному о вас пророками: «Да веселятся небеса и да торжествует земля... пред лицем Господа!» Так некогда зывал к вам пророк Давид, когда видел духовными очами грядущего Мессию—Христа Спасителя. Радуйтесь, небеса, и веселись, земля...» — зывал к вам от восторга св. пророк Исайя, когда пред его пророческими очами раскрылась картина явившегося на землю Господа для избавления человека. О небо! Веселись вместе с нами! Благовестуй нам день от дне родившегося ныне Христа Царя. Благовестуй и возвещай славу Божию. О земля! Тебе ли ныне быть безмолвной? Тебе ли не веселиться в этот знаменательный день Рождества Христова? Не ты ли уготовала рождшемуся Христу вертеп, вмести в себя Невместимого?! Веселись же, земля, и торжествуй, ибо настало и твое избавление с пришествием в мир Христа Спасителя. Не на тебе ли лежал перст проклятия, не тебе ли было сказано, чтобы ты произрастила человеку волчцы и тернии, когда он восстал против Бога? Не ты ли совоздыхала вместе с человеком от тяжести нетления? А ныне — ожидается Христос и ты освобождаешься от проклятия. Рождается Христос, и ты освобождаешься от нетления в свободу славы чад Божиих. Веселись же и торжествуй, славь рождшегося Христа Царя. Ангелы! Воспойте и вы ныне победную песнь Спасителю нашему, благоволившему родиться в вертепе от Девы. Веселитесь же вместе с нами в день радости, в день всемирного торжества! Ликуйте и торжествуйте, пойте Господу достойную хвалу, ибо рождается Христос — и человек обожается, рождается Христос — и меньшая братия ваша от дьявольских сетей освобождается. Дивные дела совершаются в нынешний день во граде Вифлееме! Веселись, небо! И ликуй, земля! Ангелы, хвалу Богу нашему пойте! Человецы, духовно торжествуйте! В нынешний день нет места плачу, нет места печали. Ныне Бог во плоти явился сущим во тьме. Помысли, человек, свое первое блаженство, из

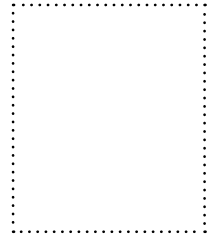
которого ты ниспал, вкусивши греха. Ты был чист и свят, но омрачился грехом, послушав лесь диавола. Ты наслаждался райским блаженством и тесным общением с Богом, но был изгнан из этого блаженства, и закрыт для тебя доступ к тесному общению с Богом. Грех возобладал тобою. Он произвел в тебе расстройство духовных и телесных сил и вверг тебя в бездну погибели. Ты рад был освободиться от греха, но грех произвел в тебе злые пожелания, обольстил тебя и умертвил, и чем дольше ты жил, тем все более тьма греховная обнимала тебя и тень смертная погружала тебя в свои объятия, пока не явился в мир Христос Спаситель. Помысли все это, человек, и возвеселись духовно, ибо тебя ради родился в убогом вертепе Христос Спаситель. Христос родился — и ты обожился; Христос родился — и ты тления греховного свободился; Христос родился — и поправа бысть сила диавола. Исчезла тьма от явившегося в мир Солнца Правды — Христа Царя. Тебе ли не торжествовать духовно, человек, тебе ли не веселиться, тебе ли не прославлять Творца своего и Господа, рождшегося в Вифлееме тебя ради?! Ты пал, но ныне восстановлен, ты изгнан из рая, но ныне открываются тебе райские двери. Ты удален от Бога, но ныне Сам Господь снисходит к тебе во плоти — да возведет тебя на первое блаженство! Не говори никто ныне: я грешен и потому не могу ликовать со всеми и воссылать хвалу Богу. Грешных ради Бог Сый во плоти явился. Потому тебе еще более должно ликовать и веселиться. Оставьте ныне, затейники шумных пиршеств, телесное веселие! Приходите, да духовно восторжествуем вкупе со Ангелами, хвалу Богу воссылающе. Оставьте то, что омрачает светлость праздника. Оставьте всякий грех — исчадие ада и диавола. Оставьте гнусные поступки. Оставьте гнев, оставьте зло, оставьте зависть и ссоры. Оставим все нечистое и темное. Восприимем светлые мысли, чистое сердце и благую волю. Принесем Христу вместо злата — любовь, вместо ладана — надежду, вместо смиренны — благие деяния. Да будем и мы достойно воссылать Богу победную песнь: Христос рождается — славите; Христос с небес — срящите; Христос на земли — возноситеся. Пойте Господеви вся земля, и веселием воспойте, людие, яко прославися. Аминь.



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