

Holy Resurrection Serbian Eastern Orthodox
Church 'Visoki Decani'

Herald

January, 2005

God's Peace - Christ is Born!



Мир Божији - Христос се роди!

Holy Resurrection Herald

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CHURCH SERVICES

Divine Liturgy — Sundays and Holidays: 10:00 AM

Great Vespers — Saturdays and Eves of Feasts: 6:00 PM (5 pm Saturdays during Great Lent)

Confessions — After Vespers or by appointment

Church office: (740) 282-4463 (9 am-1:00 pm, Mon, Wed, Fri)

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The Editorial Staff of the *Holy Resurrection Herald* assumes the responsibility and reserves the right to reject, edit or rewrite any article submitted to the *Church Herald* for publication.

January 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Truly celebrate the coming of our Lord in the flesh by participating in the beautiful services of Christmas on January 6-7.</p>		<p>In honor of the feast of the Birth of Christ, there is no fasting on from then until the Eve of Theophany. The eves of Christmas and Theophany are strict fast days.</p>		<p>The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held on Sunday, January 16 in the Lyceum following Liturgy. The budget for the coming year will be adopted and Board members will be elected. Please attend!</p>		<p>Civil New Year Great Vespers & confessions, 6 pm</p>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<p>Sun 31 of Pent. Fathers of Christ CS 9:30 DL, 10 am</p>	<p>Tiny Tams, 6 pm Tammies, 6:30</p>	<p>PK Choir, 7 pm</p>		<p>Badnji Dan DL 10 am Strict Fast</p> <p>Burning of Badnjak & Nativity Vigil, 8 pm</p>	<p>Nativity of Christ Christmas Bozic DL, 10 am</p>	<p>Synaxis of the Theotokos DL, 10 am</p> <p>Gt Vespers 6 pm</p>
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<p>After Nativity St. Stephen CS 9:30 DL 10am</p>	<p>Tiny Tams, 6 pm Tammies, 6:30</p>	<p>PK Choir, 7 pm</p>	<p>NO FAST</p>	<p>Adult Class, Library, 7 pm</p> <p>No Men's Club or Kolo meetings this month.</p>	<p>Circumcision St. Basil Julian New Years DL 10 am NO FAST</p>	<p>Gt Vespers 6 pm</p>
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
<p>Bfr Theophany CS 9:30 DL 10am</p> <p>Annual Congregation meeting, Lyceum, after liturgy</p>	<p>Tiny Tams, 6 pm Tammies, 6:30</p>	<p>Theophany eve Blessing of water, 10 am Strict Fast Home blessings begin in Mingo</p>	<p>Theophany DL & blessing of water, 10 am</p>	<p>St. John the Baptist DL 10 am</p>		<p>Gt Vespers 6 pm</p>
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
<p>Sun 34 of Pent. After Theophany CS 9:30 DL 10 am</p>	<p>Tiny Tams, 6 pm Tammies, 6:30</p>	<p>PK Choir, 7 pm</p>		<p>St. Sava DL 10 am</p> <p>Adult Class, Library, 7 pm</p>		<p>Gt Vespers 6 pm</p>
29	30	31				
<p>Sun 35 of Pent. CS 9:30 DL 10 am</p> <p>St. Sava Banquet & program, SACC, 12:30 pm</p>	<p>Tiny Tams, 6 pm Tammies, 6:30</p>	<p>Attend the Banquet and Church School program in honor of our holy Father and Patron St. Sava of Serbia, Sunday January 30 at the Cultural Center, 12:30 pm!</p>		<p>Adult classes will be held on Thursday, January 13 and 27 from 7 to 8:30 pm in the Church Library. Everyone is invited to bring their questions and learn more about our Holy Orthodox Faith.</p>		

From the Church's Records...

Departed this life:

Sophla (Berach) Ralich on November 25 at age 95. Burial at Union Cemetery, Steubenville.

Grant rest eternal in blessed falling asleep, O Lord, to the soul of Thy departed servant, and make her memory to be eternal! Vecnaja pamjat!

Dec.-January Altar Servers/Epistle Readers Schedule

December 19 Nick Jovonovich Ben Rodgers Nicodimus Karas Epistle: Michael Merick	January 2 Nick Jovonovich Ben Rodgers Nicodimus Karas Epistle: Meya Potenzini	January 9 Michael Merick Nicklas Battista Strati Maragos Epistle: Jelena Povich	January 23 Michael Merick Nicklas Battista Strati Maragos Epistle: Natasha Povich
December 26 Michael Merick Nicklas Battista Strati Maragos Epistle: Nicholas Jovonovich	Christmas Eve & Christmas Day ALL SERVERS Epistle: Maria Karas Jennifer Zatezalo	January 16 Nick Jovonovich Ben Rodgers Nicodimus Karas Epistle: Natalie Jovonovich	January 30 Nick Jovonovich Ben Rodgers Nicodimus Karas Epistle: Brittany Rodgers

Please be sure to serve or read as scheduled. If you cannot be present that day, it is your responsibility to arrange for your replacement.

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar now for these upcoming events...

The Christmas Fast (Advent) continues through Christmas Eve, January 6

Thursday, Jan. 6.....	Christmas Eve. Badnji Dan. DL 10 am. Burning of Badnjak & Nativity Vigil service, 8 pm. STRICT FAST DAY.
Friday, Jan. 7.....	Christmas Day. Bozic. The Nativity of our Lord. Divine Liturgy, 10 am.
Sunday, Jan. 9.....	St. Stephen. Liturgy 10 am.
Thursday, Jan. 13.....	Adult Class, Library, 7 pm.
Friday, Jan. 14.....	Circumcision of our Lord, St. Basil, Julian New Year. Liturgy 10 am.
Sun, January 16.....	DL 10 am. Annual Congregational Meeting, after Liturgy, Lyceum
Tuesday, Jan 18.....	Theophany Eve. Blessing of water, 10 am. Home blessings begin in Mingo Jct. area. STRICT FAST DAY
Wednesday, Jan 19.....	Theophany. Bogojavljenje. Liturgy & blessing of water, 10 am.
Thurs, Jan 27	St. Sava of Serbia. Liturgy 10 am. Adult Class, Library, 7 pm
Sunday, Jan. 30.....	St. Sava Banquet and program, SACC, 12:30 pm
Mon, March 14, 2005.....	Great Lent begins
May 1, 2005.....	Pascha (Easter)
June 19, 2005.....	Pentecost
June 24-26.....	National Serbian Youth Folklore Festival here
Mon, June 27, 2005.....	Apostles' Fast begins

Christmas Service Schedule

The services of the Christmas season are among the most beautiful of the year. All of you are urged to attend as many of the services as possible, as we confess in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that God has become a man for us and our salvation.

Christmas Eve (Badnjidan):

Christmas Eve is called Badnjidan in Serbian, because this is the day when the Badnjak (yule log) is cut and brought into the home. On the morning of Christmas Eve, we have a special Divine Liturgy. In the evening we bless and burn our church badnjak and then have the Christmas vigil, during which we welcome in the east. At this service the five loaves of bread as well as wheat, wine and oil are blessed and distributed to the faithful. Hot refreshments will be served following the service.

Strict Fast Day.

Thursday, January 6

Divine Liturgy, 10:00 am

Blessing of Badnjak and Vigil, 8:00 pm

Christmas Day (Bozic):

The Great Feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Divine Liturgy is served with the special Christmas antiphons and hymns. All those who have prepared themselves by fasting and who have received Holy Communion during Advent are welcomed and encouraged to receive Holy Communion at this Liturgy, and so partake of



the true feast. From this day until the Eve of Theophany (January 18) there is **NO FASTING**.

Friday, January 7.

Divine Liturgy, 10 am.

Assembly to the Birthgiver of God

The day following Christmas is dedicated to the Most Holy Birthgiver of God and ever-Virgin Mary. We assemble as the Church in her honor at the Divine Liturgy.

Saturday, January 8

Divine Liturgy, 10 am.

St. Stephen the Protomartyr:

The third day of Christmas is also the feastday of St. Stephen the Apostle, Archdeacon, and First Martyr. His feastday is combined with the continuing celebration of the Nativity of Christ.

Sunday, January 9

Divine Liturgy, 10 am.

Home Blessings Begin January 18

Home blessings this year will begin on Tuesday, January 18, Theophany Eve, with blessing of homes in Mingo Junction and adjacent areas. Homes will then be blessed in the order of Weirton, Steubenville and Wintersville, and then remaining areas. We will call a day or two ahead of time to let you know when we will be by. Please help out by leaving us as much leeway of time as possible.

Why an annual Home Blessing?

As Orthodox Christians, we regard our homes as a kind of church. We traditionally have icons and candles or lamps, and sometimes burn incense in our homes as part of our prayer life. The "baptism" of the home by the priest at Theophany reaffirms the connection of the home church with the Church of the whole community of the people of God.

Just as our home needs to be cleaned periodically as dirt and dust accumulate, so our homes need a

spiritual house cleaning periodically as a rededication to God and His presence in our lives and homes. We often in our day to day lives "desecrate" the sanctity of the home church by our sinful attitudes and behavior, and it is important that we rededicate our homes and our lives to Him. This is the purpose of the home blessing: to purify, to cleanse, to rededicate, and to strengthen our lives and the place we live out our lives in Christ.

After the service the water may be saved for future use. It may be drunk or sprinkled on persons or in the home in time of sickness or temptation, or it may be used in preparing holiday foods such as chesnica or slavski kolac. It should never be poured down the drain.

When Father comes, please have a table prepared with a bowl of water, a candle and an icon if possible. All should gather for the blessing, and TV's and radios should be turned off.

If your home has not been blessed before, or if it has been missed in recent years and you would like it to be blessed, please call Fr. Rade or the Church office.



From Father Rade

The Serbian people have always kept their faith close to the center of their lives. In greeting one another, Serbs commonly say, "Pomaze Bog" (God help you), and answer "Bog pomogao."

At Christmas, the Serbs and other Orthodox people go to the very center of the meaning of the Feast. Instead of saying "Merry Christmas," which simply tells us to enjoy the day, we say: "Mir Bozji—Hristos se rodi," which means "Peace from God—Christ is born!" We answer "Vaistinu se rodi"—"Truly He is born," or as many Orthodox answer, "Glorify Him!" This greeting and answer gives the whole meaning and reason of the feast, and even tells us how to celebrate it.

We say, "Christ is born" because for us it is a present reality. If He is born today, it must be that He is born continually into our hearts and lives. That first birth day of Christ makes this continual renewal of our relationship with God possible.

We say, "Peace from God" because Jesus Christ is our Peace, born to bring us peace. "For He Himself is our peace, Who has made us...one and broken down the wall of separation.... And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Ephesians 2) We wish each other peace because if He is truly born into our hearts, we must be a peace with all.

And then "Glorify Him!" Is that not the purpose of every holy day, especially Christmas—that we may truly glorify Him? Glorify Him not only with our lips, but with our lives?

As we welcome Christ again this Christmas, let us truly open ourselves to Him, to His love, and to His message of peace and goodwill. Let us become peacemakers in our homes, our parish and our community. Let us love one another, as God has first loved us by sending His Son to us.

Nativity Troparion

Thy nativity, O Christ our God, has shown to the world the light of wisdom! For by it those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Daybreak from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee!

*Peace from God—Christ is Born!
 Мир Божји—Христос се роди!
 And a most blessed New Year!*

*Yours in His love,
 Father Rade, Protinica Donna,
 Nikola & Mihajlo*

Communion at the Christmas Liturgy

Those who have received Holy Communion previously during the Advent season are encouraged to receive Holy Communion again at the Christmas Day Divine Liturgy, as the most fitting feast at the end of the fast. They should prepare themselves as usual with fasting and prayer, be present for the Christmas Eve vigil if at all possible, and come for confession/absolution if they have not had this recently.

Fasting during the Christmas Season

January 6, **the eve of Christmas**, and January 18, **the eve of Theophany**, are days of **strict fasting** in the Orthodox Church. No meat or dairy products should be eaten on these days. Of course, the Advent season (November 28–January 6) is also a time of fasting to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Savior in the flesh which should be kept.

The time **from Christmas Day through January 17 is a fast-free time**. There is **no fasting** during this time, even on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Annual Congregational Meeting January 16

The annual meeting of the Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Church School Congregation of Steubenville, Ohio will take place on Sunday, January 16, 2005 in the Holy Resurrection Church Lyceum, 528 N. Fourth St., Steubenville following the Divine Liturgy.

The annual meeting hears the reports of the parish priest and executive board on the previous year's activities, adopts an operating budget for the coming year, and elects executive board officers and members at large for the coming year. The annual meeting also gives the congregation the opportunity to ask questions, receive more information about the state of the church, and enact other business as may come before the meeting.

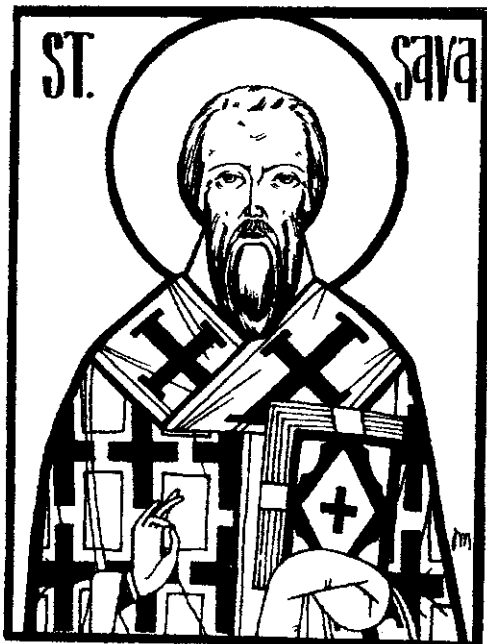
Members of the congregation who have fulfilled all the responsibilities of membership during the previous year, including sacramental, moral and financial qualifications as enumerated in the congregation bylaws and Uniform Rules and Regulations of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the US and Canada, will have the right of voice and vote at the meeting.

Light refreshments will be provided. All members are urged to attend.

The Church Board has formed a nominating committee to seek out those willing to take on an office for the coming year. Those interested in serving the congregation in a position on the Church Board are asked to notify President Mark Zatezalo or Secretary Barbara Matey for inclusion on the nominating committee report. Everyone is encouraged to consider offering their services to God and our Church as an officer or board member for the coming year.

In case a quorum is not present on January 16, the meeting will take place January 23.

Annual
St. Sava Dinner & Program



Sunday, January 30

- Divine Liturgy at Church, 10:00 am
- Cutting of the Slavski Kolac & Delicious Festal Banquet
at the Serbian-American Cultural Center, 12:30 pm
- Church School Program following banquet

Your free will offering will be greatly appreciated!

***Come honor our Patron and Father,
Saint Sava of Serbia!***



“And the
Word
Became
Flesh,
and Dwelt
among Us”

by Fr. Meletios Webber

I have just returned from the Netherlands, where I attended a Dutch birthday party for the first time. Birthdays are very important in the lives of Dutch people, much as namedays are in Greece or Russia. The family of the one celebrating gets together, along with large numbers of friends (both invited and uninvited). From what I've been told, the party follows a predictable pattern, that everyone taking part knows more or less what their role is, when to come, when to leave, when to present gifts, and what to say. Dutch people like to be quite large (or at least tall), since their houses are quite small. The atmosphere is a generally intimate and cozy atmosphere at such a party. The Dutch have their own, barely

translatable word for this atmosphere: *gezellig*—somewhere between “cozy” and “warm and fuzzy,” but also including a dimension of good companionship and agreeable conversation.

So important are birthdays in Holland that every Dutch house has a “birthday calendar” prominently displayed with (as often as not) almost every day of the year filled with names of people known to that family who celebrate their birthdays on a particular date. Adding a name to such a calendar is a naturally happy event, as the birth of a new human child, or of a new friendship, is a naturally happy event.

The Mystery of God's Incarnation
If Christmas were simply a celebration of a new birth, it would be a beautiful

event in itself. However, Christmas is very much more than that, and its significance is altogether more profound than simply that of a celebration of the birth of a young child.

The celebration of Christmas in the Orthodox Church is the proclamation of a relationship—a relationship in general between God and His creation, and in particular between God and the human race. From an Orthodox perspective, this relationship makes available a further, more intimate one which is inaugurated through taking part in the Mystery of Holy Baptism. However, let us place that to one side for the time being, and concentrate on the Mystery of the Incarnation.

Taking Christmas Back

In much of the modern world, the celebration of Christmas has been grossly tainted by a heightened sense

Putting Christ Back Into "Christ"mas

By Doria Saros

You mean it's not "X-mas" or "gift-mas" or "rush-around-and-go-crazy-mas?"

Wow, you could have fooled me! Every year I start the Christmas countdown with the **best intentions**, and each year I find it more and more difficult to keep my focus on the reason for the season? Christ.

As a forty-something youth minister and stepmother of three, I am especially concerned about my own behavior during the Christmas season. According to Group magazine, parents are the unequivocal, single most important influence on their child's spiritual growth. If I struggle to keep my focus on Christ during the madness of the shopping season, what am I demonstrating to my own children?

The world is a very seductive place in which commercial marketing is frequently challenging our God-given spiritual discernment. How many times have we found ourselves so consumed by the material aspect of gift giving that we completely lose focus of the Nativity and our greatest gift, the newborn Jesus?

We need to change our worldly thinking to a more Christian attitude of gratitude. For example, in this country, it is traditional to celebrate birthdays by showering the birthday boy or girl with accolades and gifts. So why don't we apply that same tradition for our Lord and Savior?

After all, whose birthday is it anyway?!

So, what are we going to give Jesus for His birthday this year?

I'm not saying that we should stop exchanging gifts. What I am suggesting is that we remember Jesus above all on our Christmas lists. Obviously, the gifts we give to Christ deserve greater effort than the gifts we give to one another. Therefore our "shopping" for Jesus will be more creative than in the usual sense – for here is a tremendous opportunity for us to work with our children in expressing our love for God with a truly giving heart.

Here are some gift suggestions for our Lord and Savior:

- How about giving a donation to a local food-shelf in someone's name for Christmas (adult friends love this)?
- How about taking the money that we save on groceries during our fasting and donating it to a food-shelf?
- How about making homemade cards or cookies for someone who is sick or shut-in?
- How about inviting someone into our home for the holiday meal who doesn't have family nearby?
- How about giving an elderly member of the community a ride to and from church for Christmas services?
- How about dedicating more of our prayers to being thankful?
- How about having the courage to declare "Merry Christmas" or "Christ Is Born," instead of the more 'politically correct' "Happy Holidays."

These are just a few ways to give the gift of glory to Jesus Christ. By keeping our perspective **on who** Christmas is all about, we help put the holiness back in the holiday. God willing with **each act** of kindness we will help spread the news to our children and to our community:

"Christ Is Born! Glorify Him!"

—From the Ukrainian Orthodox Office of Christian Education

of materialism and commercial exploitation, two themes which are far removed from the "God made flesh" event we are trying to celebrate.

Twice in my life, I have had experience of Christmas unconnected with this commercial chaos.

The first occurred when I had only recently been received into the Orthodox Church, and I was part of a community which used the Old Calendar, traditionally used in many parts of the Orthodox world. This meant that for us, Christmas fell on what was called January 7 by the world around us. Taking part in the Divine Liturgy that morning (and sitting around a Christmas tree later that afternoon), I was overcome with the sense of celebration of Christmas,

since for the outside world, the city of Oxford and its university, it was simply an ordinary day. I was aware of the hiddenness of the event, much as the birth in Bethlehem had been hidden all those years ago.

The second occasion happened a few years later when I was in Constantinople (Istanbul) at the end of the year. Since Turkey is almost entirely Islamic, and my visit coincided with the end of Ramadan that year, all the signs of Christmas to which I had grown accustomed in England were absent. There were no Santa Claus figures, no red and green lights, no tinsel, trees, or parties. However, upon entering a little Orthodox church near where I was staying, I came across a celebration of Christmas that was as

profound in its expression as it was simple and uncluttered in its performance. In a small church, almost empty of people, we met God incarnate.

Towards an Orthodox Celebration of Christmas

Of the many small, sometimes almost invisible, challenges which a Westerner faces when he desires to enter more deeply into the life of the Orthodox Church, the use of the word "Incarnation" is a good example. This is the normal English word used to describe Jesus becoming a human being. However, it has a slightly different sense in Western languages (based on Latin) from that which is understood in the languages of Orthodoxy.

Then was the **Type**, Now is its **Fulfillment**

The Feast of the Nativity in Scripture and Song

by V. Rev. John D. Finley

The day of Christmas, celebrated on December 25, is referred to more precisely in our liturgical books as the Feast of the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. As this title indicates, the true emphasis of this great celebration is on the Incarnation of Christ, with all its wonderful implications for "us men and for our salvation," as we proclaim in the Nicene Creed.

For centuries, this message has been the object of intense contemplation for Christian hymnographers. Many of these writers, well versed in the scriptures, have taken note of the fact that countless Old Testament prophecies pointed toward this Incarnation and found their fulfillment in this event. For this reason, they have composed hymns that describe the manifold ways in which the Old is fulfilled in the New.

How many of those who have grown up with traditional Christmas carols are aware of the ancient hymns of Nativity that have been a part of Orthodox Christian tradition for centuries? They represent a storehouse of wisdom and

spirituality, and they provide wonderful insights regarding the Old Testament foreshadowings of Christ and their fulfillment in the New Testament. Here are just a few examples:

Partakers of the Divine Nature

Genesis 3:5 recounts how Satan tempted Adam and Eve, promising that in the day they ate of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden, their eyes would be opened and they would become like God. Contemplating this verse in light of the Incarnation, St. John of Damascus (seventh century) writes:

Taking man's form, Thou hast now bestowed upon him the joy of becoming godlike: for it was in hope of this that of old we fell from on high into the dark depths of the earth.

Second Nativity Canon, Canticle 7, second troparion

Through the Incarnation and by virtue of our union with Christ in baptism, we can become partakers of the Divine Nature, becoming more godlike.

The Latin word *incarnatio* (from which we get "incarnation") actually means something like "enfleshment." The Greek word that is more generally used to describe this keystone event is *enanthropoisis*, which means the "enfleshment." The word "man" in this case refers not to man as opposed to woman (that would be *andras*), but to man as opposed to nonhumans. *Anthropos* means humankind, and is a word used for both men and women. Thus, "enhumanment" might be a better choice of translations, so long as we are not afraid of inventing new words.

God became a human being. This is the teaching which lies at the heart of the Orthodox celebration of the Nativity of Christ.



**God became a human being.
This is the teaching which lies
at the heart of the Orthodox
celebration of the Nativity of Christ.**

It took the Church many years to be able to talk of Jesus being human in a way which clearly expressed her experience, facing, defining, and discarding along the way all the heretical ideas and notions that did not fit. This whole process then underscored and more clearly defined what the Church felt to be true: Jesus

was God and Jesus was man, and each nature, the human and the divine, was complete and whole. He was a real human person, not just pretending or seeming to be one, complete with thoughts and emotions and all the characteristics of human existence, except without sin. However, He was no less God, the second Person of the

☞ **Our Return to Eden**

In Genesis 3:23, 24 we read that God sent Adam out of the Garden of Eden to till the ground and placed a flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life. In a hymn, John says:

The middle wall of partition of the ancient enmity is now laid low and destroyed by Thy coming in the flesh, O Christ, and the flaming sword now gives way before all who approach. And I partake in faith of the life-giving tree in Eden, becoming once again a husbandman of immortal plants.

Compline for the Forefeast of the Nativity, Canticle 6, first troparion

☞ **The Red Calf of Aaron**

In Numbers 19:2 we read that the children of Israel were commanded to bring Aaron a red heifer without blemish, in which there was no defect and on which a yoke had never been laid. As sung on Christmas Eve, John's hymn announces:

Today a maiden great with child comes to Bethlehem to give birth to the Lord: and choirs of angels go before her. Seeing these things Joseph, her betrothed, cried out: "What is this strange mystery in thee, O Virgin? And how shalt thou bring forth child, Calf upon whom the yoke has never come?"

Sixth hour of Christmas Eve, third sticheron

☞ **The Star of Jacob**

In Numbers 24:17 we read that a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel. The seventh-century hymnographer St. Cosmas Melodus identifies Jesus as the **Star**:

O Master who hast risen as a Star out of Jacob, Thou hast filled with joy the watchers of the stars, who interpreted wisely the words of Balaam, the soothsayer of old. As the first fruits of the Gentiles were they led unto Thee, and Thou hast openly received them as they brought Thee acceptable gifts. Glory to Thy power, O Lord. First Nativity Canon, Canticle 4, second troparion

Yes, the star came and stood over where the young child was (Matthew 2:9). Yet the young child was an even greater star, the Star out of Jacob, the Dayspring from on high (Luke 1:78) and the Sun of Righteousness, who shall arise with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2). The following hymn of the Nativity is known and loved by Orthodox Christians throughout the world:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone upon the world with the light of knowledge: for thereby they who adored the stars through a star were taught to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee. Troparion of the Feast

☞ **Gideon's Dew Fleece**

In Judges 6:37, 38 we read the story of Gideon, who received a sign that Israel would be saved when the dew fell upon the fleece. St. Cosmas finds the ultimate fulfillment of this event in the Conception of the Virgin Mary:

As dew upon the fleece hast Thou descended into the womb of the Virgin, O Christ, and as drops of rain that fall upon the earth. First Nativity Canon, Canticle 4, third troparion

John Trinita, "true God of true God," through whom all things were made." He was the "Word made flesh" who dwelt among us."

The Presence

There is a beautiful thought associated with the words "and dwelt among us" from the prologue to Saint John's Gospel. Since it appears that there is nothing completely random or coincidental along the spiritual path, it is likely that this thought may have been woven into the fabric of language at the very beginning of creation.

In the Old Testament, the Person of God is often talked of as the "Presence"—in Hebrew, the *Shekhinah*. Certainly, this is an important theme in Orthodox worship in later times,

but for the Jews the very idea of "Presence" encapsulated the reality of God. When in the desert after the exodus from slavery in Egypt, the people lived in tents, and God had His own tent, the Tabernacle. When the people moved, they packed up their tents, and they packed up God's tent too. At the next site, they set up the tents, God's among them. During the move, the Presence moved with them, as a cloud or as a fiery pillar, and then came to rest in the Tabernacle where the people were to come to a halt. So it was that God dwelt among His people: He "tented" with them.

The word in Hebrew for "presence" is *shekhinah*. The root of this word is S-K-N (this is just the way Hebrew words are put together); in the New

Testament, the word for "dwelt among us" also has its root in the letters S-K-N, but this time in Greek: *eskinosen*. This literally means He "tented," since the Greek word for tent is *skini*. Coincidence? I think not.

Jesus "tented" with His people: not in a tent made of the skins of dead animals, but in the human body. The God who created and creates the universe, who existed before all time—the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent—dwelt among us, and experienced life just as we experience life. The way in which this was possible is called by the theologians *kenosis*—"emptying." Without ceasing to be God, Jesus lived among mankind. He knew our existence, not by observing us (as we might observe animals at the

> Return from Babylon

Psalm 136 (137):2-4 we hear the cry of the Psalmist longing for Zion in the foreign land of Babylon. Yet St. Cosmas contemplates the reversal of Zion's captivity when the Magi brought the treasures of Babylon to Zion:

Babylon despoiled Zion the Queen and took her wealth captive. But Christ by a guiding star drew to Zion the treasures of Babylon, with her kings who gazed upon the stars. Therefore in praise let us sing: Let the whole creation bless the Lord and exalt Him above all for ever. First Nativity Canon, Canticle 8, third troparion

> Our Release from Sin

Proverbs 5:21, 22 we read that the Lord ponders the ways and paths of man, that man's own iniquities entrap him and he is caught in the cords of his sin. Yet the heart of the hymnographer sees the Lord of Glory as a newborn babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, yet in His Incarnation loosening these "tangled cords of sin."

Christ our God, whom the Father begat from the womb before the morning star, has come, made flesh; and He who holds the reins of the undefiled powers is laid in a manger of dumb beasts. He who looses the tangled cords of sin is wrapped in swaddling rags. First Nativity Canon, Canticle 6, second troparion

> The Virgin Shall Conceive

In the Book of the Prophet Isaiah we read that "the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His Name Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Again, the Prophet proclaims: "Behold, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into

singing, and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman," says the Lord" (Isaiah 54:1). The hymnographer, contemplating what might seem obscure in its meaning, says:

Christ comes to be born, granting in His goodness a strange rebirth to those sprung from Adam. Be glad, the whole nature of mortal man, thou that art barren and bearest not: the Master has come to make thee a mother of many children. Matins for the Forefeast of the Nativity, Canticle 1, third troparion

We can now see how the Church as our Mother, established by the Lord Jesus Christ, bears children into the Kingdom of God through the waters of baptism, the font being the womb of the Church.

In these Old Testament types and their fulfillment, we can see that salvation came to the world when Christ was born of the Virgin. Indeed, we may also say that salvation came to the world when Christ was circumcised, when He was presented in the Temple, when He was baptized, when He performed miracles, when He taught His disciples, when He suffered and died on the Cross, when He was buried, when He rose from the dead, when He ascended into Heaven, when He was seated at the Right Hand of the Father. And salvation will also come to the world when He comes again in glory. Everything that Christ did in the flesh. He did for us men and for our salvation. ←

Fr. John Finley is a mission priest with the Department of Missions and Evangelism, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. He lives in Santa Barbara, California.



*At the heart of the Church's experience
of God stands Mary, the Theotokos.
She stands, almost completely silent,
as a guarantee of the Mystery . . .*

zoo), but by becoming one of us, showing His love for us by taking the ultimate risk—the risk of being rejected.

For God So Loved the World

Teaching or doctrine in the Orthodox Church describes the experience of the saints and is not merely the extension of human logic. As such, dogma has far less to do with being right or wrong, and far more to do with describing God's life in His Church. The teachings of the Church surrounding the Nativity of Christ are an example of this. The faith of the Church does not form an abstract, logical pattern, but rather a living testimony to an experience of God.

The "enhumanment" of God was not an arbitrary act of a Divinity curious about His creation. Rather, it has as its context nothing less than pure love. Love is the matrix, the framework, of this new and revolutionary development of the relationship between God and His people. God became what we are, so that we might become like Him. In an act of pure love and generosity, God reaches towards us in unprecedented humility and allows us to enter into a profoundly significant relationship with Him.

At the heart of the Church's experience of God stands Mary, the Theotokos. She stands, almost completely silent, as a guarantee of the Mystery of "enhumanment." Although completely human, she bore "God the Word," and cooperated with God so completely that the Mystery was able to happen. She, like each one of us, had the power to keep God out of her life, a power which God respects, since love

can only emerge from a freedom of choice. But she did not shut God out. She said "yes" to God . . . and the miracle happened.

God and the Material World

In the Orthodox Church, the mysterious and wonderful relationship between God and His creation is experienced. One important aspect of this relationship is stressed in our use of icons, where physical reality (in this case wood and paint) is used by God to project the life of the Kingdom into our own dimension.

There is a recurrent theme in humanity's religious and spiritual awareness that God is somehow separate and apart from the material world. In Plato's thought, for example, God was pure spirit, and would be somehow contaminated if His contact with material reality were too close. In turn, this thinking leads to a suspicion of the concrete reality around us, and encourages us to consider our spiritual awareness a thing of the mind, and our contact with God a matter of mental effort.

One of the most important statements of Orthodox theology is that far from shrinking from His creation, God entered our reality at a level which gave philosophers cause to wonder. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Far from shunning material reality in general (and the human body in particular), God chose to meet us in our own environment, and to experience life as we experience life.

The consequence of this divine act is that we are invited to find salvation with and through the human body. We believe in the Resurrection of the body, not just in the immortality of the

soul. We are encouraged to pray with and through our bodies: when we make the sign of the Cross, our hands are praying; when we make a prostration, our whole body prays. When we receive Holy Communion, our bodies experience the Kingdom of Heaven.

God Is With Us

This year, and every year until the Second Coming, we approach the Nativity of Christ with the innocence of a child going to a birthday party. However, having arrived, we quickly grow in awareness: the celebration of "God made flesh" leads us way beyond mere celebration to participation in the banquet of the Kingdom. Through taking flesh, Jesus opened for us the way to complete communion with Him. As we receive the Body and Blood of the Savior, we experience the "enhumanment" of God right there in our own environment, and for an all-too-brief moment we cannot tell where God stops and we start.

In modern physics, there is talk of certain events in the universe which are so stupendous, so extraordinary, that they are called "singularities." The moment of creation is one such, but so is the existence of black holes, and even perhaps of "wormholes" from one universe to another.

Theologically speaking, the Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ marks a singularity which puts all others in the shadows. It is nothing less than a declaration that love is all-powerful, that "God is with us": Jesus, our Emmanuel. ✠

Fr. Meletios Webber is pastor of Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox Church in Santa Cruz, California. He is the author of Steps of Transformation: An Orthodox Christian Priest Explores the Twelve Steps (Conciliar Press, 2002).

Parts of this article are taken from Fr. Meletios's upcoming book Bread and Water: An Orthodox Experience of God, to be published by Conciliar Press in 2005.

From the Presidents Desk...

The final month of 2004 is upon us and it is time to take a look back at 2004 and the progress made on several fronts.

The 100th anniversary preliminary plans are taking shape and will move forward during the coming year. One of the initiatives underway is to provide a page with updates for every Herald that goes out from now until the actual date of the celebration. We are also exploring the idea of developing an oral history of the church through interviews with parishioners to be placed on video or audio tape. If carried through to fruition, this effort would provide an excellent historical record of the life of the parish.

Speaking of historical records, I was informed by our resident computer guru, Dragan Lazich, that all the year's Heralds are available on our home page (www.hrsoc-steuben.org). If you missed an issue or have friends and family that may wish to read about our parish, this resource is available.

As you know, in past letters I have reported that we have made progress in the task of improving the performance of OUR Serbian American Cultural Center. The SACC board and Director Nick Jovonovich have been diligently working to return the project to a profitable footing and to continue to strengthen the viability of the center in the future.

Phase I of the plan is complete. As of the end of November, the center is showing a profit for the year and will be in the black for the total 2004. This is a major victory. In the coming year we will use this momentum to build revenue and continue to improve operations.

First a couple of highlights. The center has become the preferred location for large weekday meetings. This has helped us maintain revenue while building bookings for weekends in the coming year. This year showed a marked increase in our holiday buffets. Most notably, those Persons taking advantage of our Thanksgiving buffet increased 20 per cent from the past year.

Looking forward, we will host a major fund raising event to benefit the restoration of the Millsop Community Center on March 19. Renaissance Weirton is selling tickets for \$100 per person and \$125 per couple if any parishioners are interested in attending. The Tesla Lounge improvements are progressing thanks to work performed by Martha Zatezalo and Steve Drazich.

All of which leads to the final point. As part of the plan to move forward, the HRC Inc. is spearheading the project to replace the rug in the building. Donations for rug replacement are already coming in and we anticipate installation some time in January. While we believe much of the funds needed are in place, any donations will help us get a jump on 2005 and will make possible more improvements in the future.

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held January 16 after liturgy in the Lyceum. I hope all our church members will attend, and will consider getting more involved in the work of our Church community, including by accepting election to various offices.

Finally, your Church Board and I personally wish all of you a very blessed Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. Mir Bozji-Hristos se rodi!

See you in church.

Mark

New Church Office Secretary, Hours

The Church Board has been working for some time to computerize and streamline our church's financial and membership record-keeping. Beginning January 1 our new computerized system will be up and running.

To manage the new system, the Board has retained the services of Tracy Yaich of Wintersville. Tracy, the wife of Mark Yaich and mother of their two young children, has extensive experience with computerized accounting and record keeping. We welcome her to our office staff.

At the same time, the Board and all the members of the Church thank longtime Financial Secretary Mary Drazich and longtime office clerk Estelle Volosin for their years of faithful service. Both of them will be leaving the Church office when the transition to the new system is completed. We thank them, Tracy, and especially outgoing Church Treasurer Fred Kosanovic for their efforts in making the new system a reality.

As part of the transfer of responsibilities in the Church office, new office hours will also take effect. The Church office will be open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm for phone calls and walk-in business. Ring the door bell next to the rear double doors of the Church School building for admittance.

We hope that during this time of transition we will be able to maintain the same high standards of service you are accustomed to. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Help Decorate the Church for Christmas



Donate to the Christmas Flower Fund

The Sveta Petka Kolo Sisters are again this year taking charge of the purchase of flowers and decorations for our Church for Christmas. The beautiful poinsettias, wreaths and other decorations make the Church seem even more special for this great holiday. We will be able to purchase as much as your donations allow, so please be generous in donating towards the Church Christmas Decoration Fund. Donations may be sent to Martha Dadasovich, 1441 Overlook, Weirton, WV 26062, phone 304-748-7123. Please be sure to send only checks (no cash) through the mails. Please make your donations early so that we can plan our orders. Thank You!

Church Christmas Decoration Fund Donation Form



Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount of donation: \$ _____

In Memory of or for Health of (Optional): _____

Please return this form with your donation to:

Martha Dadasovich, 1441 Overlook, Weirton, WV 26062 304-748-7123

Holy Resurrection Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church
Wellness Program

Gospel of St. Matthew, 25:40 " The King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of these my brethren, you did it to me.'"

December 2004/January 2005

Preparation

Advent, second only to Lent, is an important time of preparation to Orthodox Christians.

Cold Weather

Coming to those of us who stay in the northern states for the winter months.

Birthday Celebration

Those who follow the new calendar honor Christ's arrival to earth in human form.

What does December mean to you?

Let us each one **Prepare**, stay **Warm** and **Welcome** Christ's arrival in a way most pleasing to **HIM**.

WVU Focus on Health second surveys (we do 3 total) need to be completed as soon as possible and returned to the church office or Diane.

The wellness corner in the Lyceum has booklets related to getting through the holidays when you've lost a love one. Please take a minute to stop by and review some of the booklets available for you to take home to read for yourself or someone in need. These booklets are free for your use.

Blood pressure readings are being done after Liturgy each month; stop by the wellness corner in the Lyceum on the listed Sunday.

I will be checking with the church office each week, if you have an issue to discuss just let them know so I can call you. You can call me directly at 304-723-6019

Thank you all for this opportunity to serve our God in this way by helping you.

Until next time --- See you Sunday --- Diane◊-<

CAN'T AFFORD IT?

YES YOU CAN!

Tough times usually mean a decline in charitable giving. It's no different for the Serbian Orthodox Church than it is for United Way or the Red Cross. In a slow economy, people tend to give less.

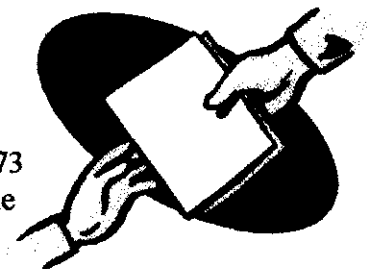
But the needs of the church continue, even during economic downturns, and in many cases become greater. How can you help? What's the answer?

EASY ANSWER

In the spirit of the Serbian church's movement toward stewardship, the Serb National Federation has developed an easy way for people to make significant charitable contributions to their church, receive a tax break, support the SNF, and preserve Serbian heritage, culture, and traditions - *through an insurance policy.*

"Let me give you an example," said Steve Balach of Duluth, Minnesota, SNF insurance consultant:

A 50-year-old male wants to leave \$10,000 to his church, but a lump sum donation is not practical. For an annual **TAX DEDUCTIBLE** premium of only \$273 (less than \$75 paid quarterly) on a SNF policy with the church as beneficiary, this gift of \$10,000 is achievable.



"In this way, the church is the owner and beneficiary of the policy, and this man knows that on his death the church will receive the gift, a gift which will only cost him \$273 a year." The entire \$273 is deductible on his federal tax return; and at the same time, the SNF is enriched by a new member or the additional insurance.

DON'T LIKE ANNUAL PAYMENTS?

In the same scenario, the 50-year-old male may choose to make a lump sum payment of \$3,480 for a paid up \$10,000 policy with the church as beneficiary. Because the owner and beneficiary (church) is a non-profit, the premium can offer a tax break. The policy would then remain in place until his death, at which time the church would receive his \$10,000 gift.

“Not everyone is insurable,” said Balach. “If an individual were uninsurable, the SNF offers annuities with a minimum deposit of \$250, again, making the church congregation owner and beneficiary.”

SNF President Dan Pyevich loves the idea. “Purchasing an insurance policy is a unique way of contributing to the future of your church,” said Pyevich. At the same time, the SNF is benefiting and the individual is receiving a tax break.

“Purchasing an insurance policy is a unique way of contributing to the future of your church.”

Looking back over the past few years only, think of what it could have meant to your church community if just half of the parishioners that passed on would have made such a generous and practical investment in the future of the church and the Serb National Federation. “Our church would have been \$70,000 richer at least,” said one Midwesterner.

For more information and absolutely no obligation, complete the simple form below. Brother Balach will contact you with details.

Take the first step to being a steward to the Serbian Orthodox Church. Help perpetuate Serbdom through the Serb National Federation and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The SNF encourages Serbian Orthodox parishes to reprint this article and coupon in their bulletins.

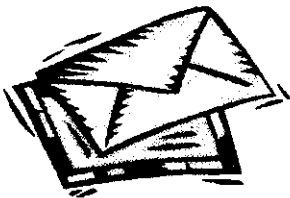
Important Tasa information for 2005

The Church has assigned new donation envelope numbers to most members for 2005 as part of the regular updating of our files. If you have not used all of your 2004 envelopes by December 31, please discard your old envelopes and begin using your new envelopes on January 1, 2005. This is very important to ensure donations are recorded for the proper person, because your new envelope number will not be the same as your previous number. Thank you for your cooperation.

Count me in!

I AM INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT
CHARITABLE GIVING THROUGH THE
SERB NATIONAL FEDERATION

NAME	MALE	FEMALE	
ADDRESS			
CITY	STATE	ZIP	
PHONE ()			
EMAIL	DATE OF BIRTH		
CIRCLE ONE:			
BEST WAY TO REACH ME IS BY	MAIL	PHONE	EMAIL
BEST TIME TO REACH ME IS	A.M.	P.M.	WEEKENDS



Mail this form to:
Serb National Federation
Attn: Stewardship
One Fifth Avenue – 7th Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

or email this information to:
smbalach@computerpro.com

or Fax this information to:
412-642-1372

**CHRIST IS
BORN!**



**GLORIFY
HIM!**

The Officers and Members of the Church Board,
together with the *Herald* and church office staffs
wish all of you a most joyous and blessed
Christmas and New Year!

**Mir Bozji! Hristos se rodi!
i Sretna Nova 2005 Godina!**

**Peace from God! Christ is born!
and a blessed New Year 2005!**

Donations Received

Church Donations

Peter Kvocka 100
Ruth A. Davis 20
Jennie K Zakovich 20
Edna Nicely 20
Gabriel Rozsa 15

Church School Donation

M/M Richard Jenikovsky 20

Relief Fund

Anonymous 310
Terry Mamula 25

St Demetrius

M/M Nino Karas 30
M/M Nick Karas 25
M/M Daniel Kakascik 20

St Michael

Proto & Protinica Merick 50
Minnie Merick 20

St Nicholas

M/M Eli McKay 200
M/M George Martich 100
Peter Matijevec 10

St Nicholas Imo Nick Marovich

Mildred Marovich 10

Church Slava

Alan & Mary Campbell 25
Sophia Liggett 10

Thanksgiving

Millie Koval 50

Christmas

Millie Koval 50

Imo Walter "Bud" Vojvodich

Alan & Mary Campbell 10
Sophia Liggett 10

Imo Stanley Sarap

Anna Arbutina 20
Dorothy Baron 20
Leonard Tost 20

Imo Rudy Krivoshia

Brother of Marie Karas
Nick & Marie Karas 25
Sophia Divich 20
Dusan & Sava Saula 20
Petar Krstich Choir 20
Lillian Zellar 10

Imo Rudy Krivoshia-(Bldg Fund)

M/M Joe Staffilino & Fam 50
M/M Nick Jovonovich 25
M/M Geno Ardito 20
M/M Albert DiAntonio & Fam. 20
Nick & Mary Drazich 20
M/M Daniel Kakascik & Fam 20
M/M Randy Gleason & Fam) 20
Dushie & Dolly Mistovich)
Anna Roberts 10
Mildred & Louise Vuckovich 10
Dorothy Yurjevic 10

Imo George Chuich

Sanford Yoka 25
Georgia Milosovich 20

Imo Joy Matey Yetman—Sister of

Arthur Matey(Bldg Fund)
Arthur & Barbara Matey 55

Imo Nedja Vuchenich

Alan & Mary Campbell 10

Imo Sam Peters

Naida Viltro 20

Imo Mickey Boich-(Cemetery)

Carmella Zinno 20

Imo Sara Mesic

Alan & Mary Campbell 20
M/M Peter Markel 20

Imo Walter "Bud" Vojvodich &

Ret. Major General Mele
Vojvodich
Naida Viltro 20

Imo George Drazick

Mrs. Mildred Drazick 50

Imo George & Louis Brdar

Alan & Mary Campbell 20

Imo Nozica & Radovanov Families

Julia Nozica 100

Imo Tim Biondillo

Al and Toni Goykovich 10

Imo Jenny & Eli Zatezalo

Marcella Z Begovic 1,000

Imo Sophia Ralich

Mabel Krnich 50
Ann Mavromatis 25
M/M Don Orbovich 25
Alan & Mary Campbell 20
Naida Viltro 20
M/M Mele Vukelic 20
M/M Bob Yurjevic 20
Janet Vukelic Polverini 10
Bess Pankovich Simpson 10

Imo Soka Ralich (Cemetery Fund)

Bessie Dadasovich 25

Imo Ted Cragulets

Bertha Galaida & Fam 25
Jim & Helen Govlovski 20
Anne Beck 10
Anne Burger 10
Anne Doane 10

Imo Sagy & Anna Golubofsky

George Golubofsky 50

Building Fund

Completed Pledge
Mike M Vuchenich 875

Building Fund

Pledge Payment
Mrs Mildred Drazick 10