

# Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church

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Pastor: Very Reverend Father Kevin E. Marks, Protopresbyter

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Facebook: [facebook.com/st.michaelsbyz.campbell](https://facebook.com/st.michaelsbyz.campbell)

X: [twitter.com/byzcampbell](https://twitter.com/byzcampbell)

Holy Mystery of Reconciliation ..... Available before/after liturgies.

Holy Mysteries of Initiation ..... Contact the parish office.

Holy Mystery of Anointing ..... Contact the parish office.

Holy Mystery of Marriage ..... Contact the parish office at least 8 months prior to wedding.

Religious Education Classes ..... Resumes January 7, 2025.

BryanTEEN Youth Group ..... Parochial/Community activities; see Keri.

GCU ..... Call Ed Stanko at 330-758-4190.

St. Michael's Civic Club ..... Call Nick DuBos at 412-726-8527 or email him at [nicholasdubos@gmail.com](mailto:nicholasdubos@gmail.com).

St. Michael Hall, 405 Robinson Road ..... Contact parish office for rentals.

St. Michael Cemetery, Sanderson Avenue ..... Call Jerry Shirilla at 330-534-9104.

Your Will ..... Please be so kind as to remember St. Michael's in your last will and testament. Secure our future.

**WEEKEND LITURGIES:** Sat eve: 6:00 p.m. Sun: 11:00 a.m.

**HOLIDAYS:** 6:00 p.m.

**CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE:** Inside Bulletin

## *The Story of the Origin of Jesus Christ, Son of David, and the Rest of the Names*

Matthew's genealogy is extraordinarily comprehensive in his theology of the roots of Jesus' story in the Old Testament. But that is only one part of the story of Jesus Christ. The story has a sequence as well; and the continuing sequence is what makes the genealogy "good news" for Matthew's audience and for us. Human being have been empowered to preserve, proclaim, and convey the salvation brought by Jesus Christ throughout history. The God who wrote the beginnings with crooked lines also writes the sequence with crooked lines, and some of those lines are our own lives and witness.

A God who did not hesitate to use the scheming as well as the noble, the impure as well as the pure, men to whom the world hearkened and women upon whom the world frowned – this God continues to work through the same melange. If it was a challenge to recognize in the last part of

Matthew's genealogy that totally unknown people were part of the story of Jesus Christ, it may be a greater challenge to recognize that the unknown characters of today are an essential part of the sequence. The proclamation of that genealogy in the Advent liturgy is designed to give us hope about our destiny and our importance.

By stressing the all-powerful grace of God, the genealogy presents its greatest challenge to those who will accept only an idealized Jesus Christ whose story they would write only with straight lines and whose portrait they would paint only in pastel colors. If we look at the whole story and the total picture, the Gospels teach us that Jesus' ministry was not thus; the history of the church teaches us that the sequence as not thus. God's grace can work even with people like us.

*Father Raymond E. Brown, S.S.*



## SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD SUNDAY OF THE ANCESTORS



*Icon of the Holy Ancestors*





Christ Is Born!  
Glorify Him!  
Christós Raždájetsja!  
Slávite Jeho!

## The Feast Of The Holy Nativity Of Our Lord, God, And Savior Jesus Christ

Tues., Dec 24

### Christmas Eve

8:30 p.m.

Christmas Carols followed by Procession

\*\*\*9:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS DIVINE LITURGY



Wed., Dec 25

### Christmas Day

\*\*\*11:00 a.m.

CHRISTMAS DIVINE LITURGY

\*\*\*either one fulfills Christmas obligation

Thurs., Dec 26

## THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS — Solemn Holyday

6:00 p.m.

+Andrew Tablack

(46th anniversary of passing 12.28)



requested by: Granddaughters

Fri., Dec 27

## The Feast Of The Protomartyr & Archdeacon Stephen — Simple Holy Day

6:00 p.m.

+Steve Arendas +Steve Millich  
+Stephen Millich Jr.

requested by: Andy & Marge Arendas

Sat., Dec 28

## (Vigil Sunday Divine Liturgy)

6:00 p.m.

+Dr. Paul M. Dubos  
(remembrance of 56th birthday)

+Helen D. Dubos  
(remembrance of 89th birthday 12.29)



requested by: Family

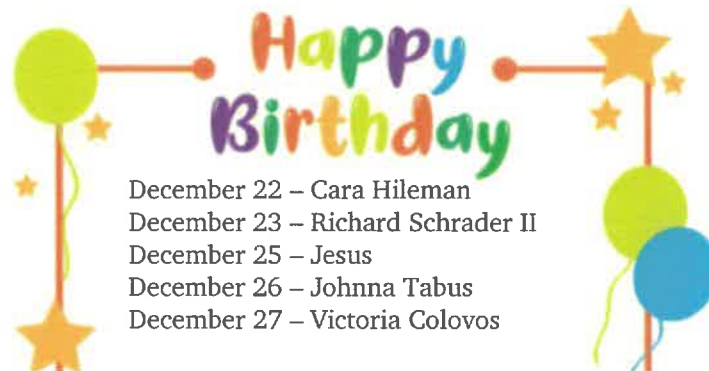
Sun., Dec 29

## THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS — Commemorating St. Joseph, King David, & St. James

11:00 a.m.

+James T. Klingensmith  
(3rd anniversary of passing 12.17)

requested by: Keri Vokish



December 22 – Cara Hileman  
December 23 – Richard Schrader II  
December 25 – Jesus  
December 26 – Johnna Tabus  
December 27 – Victoria Colovos

## Church Attendance

Saturday 12/14 – **61** (6:00 pm)

Sunday 12/15 – **40** (11:00 am)

## Pray For Our Homebound, Sick, Hospitalized, & In Recovery updated: Dec. 20, 2024

RESIDING AT HOME – Greta Marks, Nancy Modarelli, Vera Orosz, Patti Pancoe, Lucille Puhak,  
Martha Swantek, Maria & Ed Tirpack.

The Inn at Ironwood (6699 Ironwood Boulevard, Canfield, OH 44406) – Dorothy Leone.

Vista Center At The Ridge (3379 Main Street, Mineral Ridge, OH 44440) – Ken Zahorsky.

Windsor House at St. Mary's (1899 W. Garfield Road, Columbiana, OH 44408) – Anne Thomas.

## Church offerings from Dec. 14 & 15, 2024

Sunday Offering .... \$1,160.00

Loose Currency .... \$50.00

Candles .... \$76.00

Christmas .... \$40.00

Holyday .... \$10.00

TOTAL: **\$1,336.00**



December 15th TOTAL:

**\$210.00**

## Weekly Requirement to Meet Yearly Expenses

Date	Collection	Required	(Shortage)
Dec. 15	\$1,336	\$2,850	(\$1,514)
YTD	\$ 115,429	\$142,500	(\$27,071)



Thanks to Wilma Melender (See Luke 2:1-16) 12-24-2010  
THIS IS LIKE TOTALLY THE COOLEST  
THING THAT HAS EVEN HAPPENED IN THIS  
STABLE!

## Quote of the Week

"If you truly love the Lord,  
you want only what He wants."

— Conor Gallagher

# O Come, All Ye Faithful

M F M O O B Q F K J D S D R E Z L R L M C J V H G N I K M F  
H E T B X Z K W J H S L F K V A A O W S V U O A Y R Z X D N  
I I H S L U U I X W K E N V E V W B Z E Q L Y L O D H T H S  
M Q I E U U G G B H Z J T K O I G V O T E Z R L B I K S X X  
E V B N L M A N H D H E Y J A X Q F I S V H W E L I O P Y T  
W O J D Q H J E T A P L G S C J H O T E T R B L Z M B I H I  
Y R U C E T T Y D R Q Z H T T Q P A T H B J U U Y A B R F G  
O F Q V J S D E X A F X B J R Z B S S E M O R J B O F I F F  
B I N O G X E K B H G V Y D S L E W I Y Z W K A R T U T E A  
A E N Q M K L R K V A P M O E K N Q R H T U D H W W V Y U E  
E V Z O K E D S T E H I K G E L W A H X U H M D F Z A G B C  
W D F H K R R B Y T N Z R F X I B N C E I U J T O S B L L F  
E R O D A B B U R Z X L A O H G X H O K X L C H E A V E N Z  
T I D X B L B I L R P V S N L X M G N F M R F Y I L L U I R  
D U G O Q V U U O S O W Z O H G G Y M Q X E M Z C X P X O Z  
E D J H G M F I W H P L E S J R H Q B N P O Z Y P U T O L M  
F R Y S P H V O S R I N S F H O J N A P T Y E A Z B Q Q Q Z  
N D O H T A W X W B U I L C O T E Y C Y G A B S N Z I S G Y  
I K A I S J D B F W V U D J E Q C P Z T U J P B O H F H C E  
K N A N A Q N Z N U O Q M I S Z F B E Y E B N Y J K H A C F  
T F B S D U R C H O O N J P V P R L H A S E L S E P A Z N Y  
C Y P L Q Y H Q D Q W E U Z G F J H H D C P Z H F H Y G W R  
T R R Q O O S I N G Q T N O I T A T L A X E G H C Y D K K I  
L D D O I N D T R C W K M P Q L Q T X S N X N E H F W K T F  
N Y K R L U H C R U H C I S F O U H W R J C I F M Q Q P H N  
C Q Q D P G V X R Z E K T N H S N M J I S F K K O H W N R I  
P H R M V D Q O P K L R Y M N D B P G W V O T N X J N Z E I  
F O V N O Z J V J T T T P F C T O W X N A T I V I T Y H E H  
L U Z S K N W E Z D J Z U P O Y S P N J M F A Z Q F X B R J  
V E O C R V K K N L L X K S E L C B W K H L G Y S H N X X X

Son of God Desert Hay Peace Faithful Spirit Three Stable Choir

Gloria Hallelujah Nativity Bethlehem Adore King Christ Lord

Inn Savior Church Sing Exaltation Heaven Glory Triumphant



## 2024 Christmas Message From Our Pastor



My Dear St. Michael Parish Family:

One of the most popular Christmas Carols is “Joy to the World.” *“Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing...”*. The joy to the world is something we will experience when we have welcomed the Christ Child into our hearts.

If we found less joy than we were hoping, we may not have spent much time, “preparing him room.” The decorating, baking, planning, and buying, buying, buying seems to always take up all our time. Yet, there is something else that oftentimes gets in the way of “preparing him room”, that is, complaining. People seem to complain a lot more these days...“the waitress was too slow, the price is too high, I don’t care for the way this is done...etc.” Even when it comes to our church, we can have the tendency to complain too much.

If anyone had the right to complain, it certainly would’ve been Mary and Joseph. Both facing hardships of explaining an unplanned pregnancy, walking many miles to find a place for Mary to deliver the child, fleeing from place to place from the threat of Herod, and fearing the unknown surrounding this newborn infant. But did they complain?...NOT AT ALL. From Joseph being a provider in every way, to Mary saying “yes” and her willingness to become the Mother of God, they remained joyful at God’s miracle in bringing His Son into the world and placed their entire hope in baby Jesus.

The Holy Family reminds us to stop any complaining, and instead, find the joy and hope that this Christmas season once again brings. On December 24th, the Catholic Church begins a Jubilee year of Hope. Let’s make it a year of less complaining, and focus more on hope in the Lord, hope in always attending and glorifying our St. Michael Church, hope for healing for those who are sick, hope for peace for those who are suffering, and hope for love that we can give as Jesus instructed us to do.

As your pastor and dean, I wish you a joyful and hopeful Christmas and a good start to the Jubilee Year of Hope. Merry Christmas! Christ Is Born!



*Fr. Kevin*





## Seasonal Christian greeting during Christmastime

The greeting that we salute each other with is **CHRIST IS BORN!** (Christós Raždájetsja!) The response is **GLORIFY HIM!** (Slávite Jeho!). This is also the greeting we use for mirovanije.

## The Feast of the Synaxis of the Theotokos on Thursday

A synaxis, (*greek meaning, assembly*), in the Byzantine Catholic Church, is a feast on which we honor those saints who are connected with the saints or mystery celebrated on the previous day. The Church established this feast to draw our attention to Christ's Holy Mother and to give us an opportunity to praise her after the birth of her Divine Son. In addition, the feast reminds us of the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt to save the Divine Infant from the massacre of innocent children ordered by King Herod after the departure of the Magi.



## The Feast of St. Stephen, the First Martyr on Friday

On the third day of Christmas, our Byzantine Catholic Church celebrates the memory of the First Martyr and Archdeacon, St. Stephen. All that we know about Stephen the Proto-martyr is found in chapters 6 and 7 of the Book of Acts. The early Christian congregations, like the Jewish synagogues, had a program of assistance for needy widows. The people accordingly chose seven men, including Stephen, and the apostles laid their hands on them. They are traditionally considered to be the first deacons, although the Scriptures do not use the word to describe them. Stephen was an eloquent and fiery speaker, and a provocative one. His blunt declarations that the Temple service was no longer the means by which penitent sinners should seek reconciliation with God enraged the Temple leaders, who caused him to be stoned to death. As he died, he said, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."



## Pray at our Church Manger

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus was born in a manger in a cave of Bethlehem of Judea because there wasn't any room in the local inn. In commemoration of these facts, a Nativity Manger set is placed in the Church. We come to the Holy Manger and offer our prayers to the newly born Christ Child during the Holy Nativity Season. As we pray at the Holy Manger of the Christ Child and reflect upon the humble scene, we must ever realize the tremendous debt of gratitude that we owe to Jesus, the Son of God, for having come into the world in order to save us. Pray before the Holy Manger sometime during this Holy Season.



## The significance of the Christmas Trees



The Christmas trees remind us of the eternal life brought to us by Jesus Christ, while the tree decorations remind us of His spiritual gifts and blessings. The exchange of gifts from under the tree expresses our mutual love in imitation of the infinite love of our Heavenly Father who so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that all those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life.

## No penitential practice this Friday

In celebration of our Lord's Nativity, our Byzantine Catholic Church proscribes NO FASTING/PENANCE on Friday, December 27th. Enjoy meat this Friday.

## New Years Eve get-together – sign up by Today

2025

A New Years Eve get together will be held at our hall on **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31st beginning at 7:30 p.m.** Heavy Appetizers will be on the menu. Soda and coffee/tea will be provided along with champagne and wine. You may bring your own other drinks if you wish. You can also bring board games or card games or come anytime or leave anytime. It's just a nice get-together and safe way to ring in the New Year. **THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THIS EVENT** but please sign up by Today!

## Seeking sponsors for 'Night At The Races' - Submitted by Nick DuBos

"Race Sponsors needed: **The Civic Club is hosting a Night at the Races fundraiser on February 1, 2025.** There will be 10 races and the Civic Club is looking for a sponsor, at \$100, for each race. Do you know of anyone or a business that would be willing to sponsor a race? Each sponsor's name and/or logo will be prominently displayed in the program book. If so, please see Civic Club members Brian Macala, Mike Stanko, or Nick DuBos. The Civic Club looks forward to an exciting evening on February 1st."

## Jubilee Year begins Christmas Eve

Pope Francis announcing the Jubilee 2025: "We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire..." The Jubilee Year will offer the faithful opportunities to participate in various jubilee events at the Vatican and in their own dioceses. The great tradition of opening the Holy Door will begin when Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on December 24, 2024. Other holy doors will be opened at the Rome basilicas of St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major and St. Paul Outside the Walls. For pilgrims who cannot travel to Rome, bishops around the world are expected to designate their cathedrals or a popular Catholic shrine as special places of prayer for Holy Year pilgrims, offering opportunities for reconciliation, indulgences and other events intended to strengthen and revive faith.





## 2024 Christmas Memorial Candles ~ In Loving Memory of:



John Macala	Sr. Vitalia Tomcho
Mary Lou Macala	Elain Andras
Helen Puhak	Sr. Leocadia Sevachko, OSBM
John Puhak Sr.	Chris Kramer
Margaret Bukovac	Phyllis & Paul Witherow
Joseph Bukovac Jr.	Martin & Rose Muzina
Stephen & Rose Samek	Nora Sabella
Melina Edenfeld	Sarafin & Mary Buta
Daniel & Marina Opritza	John & Mary Muzina
Rev. Fr. Constantin Tofan & Suzanne Tofan	Marlene Tofan
Archbishop Valerian Trifa	Anne Samek



## 2024 Christmas Memorial Candles ~ In Loving Memory of:



Bill Marks Sr.	Lloyd Ellis
Billy Marks Jr.	Dale Sullivan
John & Margaret Kohl	Eddie Smith
Frank & Anna Marks	Beverly Harris
Msgr. Russell A. Duker	Robert & Randy McBride
Dan & Dorothy Shirilla	Rosemarie Husk
George & Ina Zbell	John & Mary Muzina
Joe & Anne Adams	Steve & Marge Millich
John Van Such	Steve Millich Jr.
Helen C. Van Such	Millich & Mikita Deceased Families
Steve & Catherine Van Such & Deceased Family	Steve & Anna Arendas
Dominic & Louise Cutrone & Deceased Family	Arendas & Kocurek Deceased Families
Roy & Mildred Holtz	Mr. & Mrs. John Macabobby
Ruth Kinnick	Patty Lavernick
Agnes & Joseph Kinnick	Tom Kolat
Helen & George Kinnick	Paul Vagnarelli
John & Mary Jevesok	Antonio Scalise
Lou Biska	Stephana George & Dennis Cameron
Francis & Norene Kotasek	Martha Macala
Andrew & Mary Tablack	Irene Waliga
Stephen & Susan Kotasek	Eileen DiNiro
Victor & Theresa Vrabel	Stephen DuBos
Deceased Members of Ford Family	Mary DuBos
Deceased Members of Wayda Family	Roma Cataldi
Anne Samek	Patricia Games
Francis Lazorcak	John Dubos
Paul & Marcella Hospodar	Margie Dubos



## 2024 Christmas Memorial Candles ~ In Loving Memory of:



Nicole Raybuck	Mary Macala
Michael Zackasee	George Macala
Victor "Mr. Vic" Vrabel	Helen & Mary Dubos
Antoinette Filak	Jane & Carmen Lanzo
Edward Filak	Don Lanzo
John Burda	Ray & Ryan Lanzo
Victor J. Vrabel	Nicholas Ihnat
Theresa Vrabel	Mary & John & Philip Siva
Joseph Filak	Stephen & Shirley & Stephen Yuhas
Mary Filak	Mary Sweeny
Cheryl McClymonds	Charles & Mary Arendas & Sons
Walt Shabella	Mary & Andrew Ihnat
John Lucas	John "Pope" Kovach
Mary Lucas	Matilda Kovach
Edward Lucas	Baby Christopher Michael Kovach
John R. Lucas	Dan Cebula
JoAnne Long	Helen Cebula
Joseph Lucas	Jim Cebula
Agnes Lucas	Jeff Gomori
Mary Kropinak-Kotch	John Cebula
Paul Kotch Sr.	Mary Cebula
Larry Edwards	Anna Kolesar
Charles Edwards	Mack Kolesar
Edward Vasilchek	Pat Potkonicky
Emily Vasilchek	Steve Potkonicky
Geraldine Testa	Richad Trexler
Irene Kovalchick	John Thomas



## 2024 Christmas Memorial Candles ~ In Loving Memory of:



Daniel Watkins	Frank Turocy
Katie Burkhart	Deceased Members of the Evan Family
Paul & Rosemary Dubos	Kyle Brown
Dr. Paul M. Dubos	John & Joanne Evan
The Deceased Members of Macek Family	Mary Jane Roper
Anna Drotar	Mary Helen Kondas
Carmel Carson	John Puhak Jr.
Margaret Comstock	Mary Bukovac
Deceased Members of Carson Family	Joseph Bukovac Sr.
Deceased Members of Drotar Family	Joseph Kodas
John Hostal	John L. Powers
Ruth Hostal	Joan M. Powers
John R. Hostal	Susan Powers
Sr. Mary Conrad Walsh	Howard Liberty
Bill Noel	Christopoher Newman
Twila Loboy	Michael & Anna Timcisko
Raymond Tirpack	John & Ceillia Timicisko
Tom Sevasko	Gerald Arendas
John & Mary Olexa	Jack McAllister
Trill Family	Shirley McAllister
Deceased Members of Tirpack Family	Marge & John Hudak
Michael Sr. & Anne Katula	Anna & Joseph Rudinec
Florence Katula Galida	Margaret & John Hudak
Gloria Katula	Elizabeth & Stephen Roman
Michael Carney & Sara Lopez	Lena & Paul Hudak
Andrew & Margaret Slanina	Fr. Nicholas Kraynak
Patricia DeFrangia	Fr. Joe Zamary



6. One of the greatest highlights of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord is the solemn celebration of the Great Compline with Litija (Povecerije Velikoje).

Long before midnight, at the sound of the first bell inviting the faithful to attend the services, the faithful hurry to the solemnly decorated church. As they continue to keep watch for the arrival of the hour of the Birth of the Savior, they express their genuine spiritual joy in singing the traditional Christmas carols. Exactly at midnight, all bells begin to peal joyously announcing to the world that the Redeemer is born. The solemn celebration of the Great Compline with Litija begins.

After the somber recitation of the chosen Psalms, suddenly the joyous singing of the Song of Isaiah, “God is with us” (“S nami Boh”) is intoned. The faithful respond with a joy and exultation that fills the church proclaiming the mysterious Birth of the Son of God.

The liturgical hymns and songs of the Litija and the Matins that follow are gems and masterpieces of Byzantine hymnography. They were composed by such great hymnographers as St. Roman the Melodist (d. 560), St. Sophronius of Jerusalem (d. 644), St. Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733), St. John Damascene (d. 749), St. Cosmas of Maiuma (d. 760), St. Stephen the Sabbait (d. 794) and others. With their inspiring compositions they filled our Christmas Liturgy with a deep sense of mystery, moving poetry, spiritual jubilation and profound gratitude.

The midnight services fittingly close with the solemn singing of the angelic hymn of thanksgiving: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Lk. 2:14).

7 With a treasury of traditions such as these, it is no wonder that the Byzantine Rite faithful so earnestly prepare themselves before the great Feast of the Nativity and derive so much joy and spiritual unction in the celebration of the Feast itself.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

“TROPARION, TONE 4”

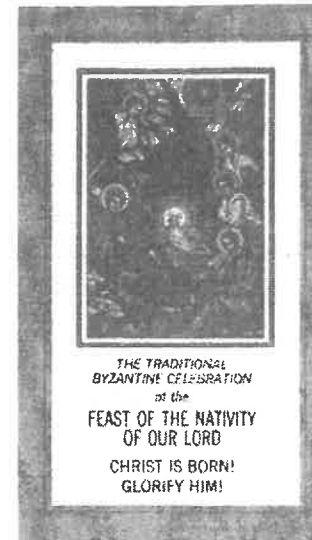
Your birth, O Christ our God, has shed upon the world the light of knowledge; for through it those who worshipped the stars have learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of Justice, and to recognize You as the Orient from on high, glory be to You, O Lord. (St. Stephen the Sabbait)

“KONTAKION, TONE 3”

Today the Virg in gives birth to perfect Essence, and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible; the angels sing His glory with the shepherds; the wise men journey with the star; for there is born to us an Infant Child, Eternal God. (St. Roman the Melodist)

“CANON, ODE 7”

O Christ, our Defender, taking the form of man, You have bestowed upon him (man) the joy of becoming Godlike! (St. John Damascene)



## THE TRADITIONAL BYZANTINE CELEBRATION of the FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

“Christ is born, glorify him! Christ came from heaven, welcome Him! Christ is on earth, exult! Sing to the Lord all the earth, Joyfully praise Him all you nations, For He has become glorious!”

With these inspiring words, Saint Gregory of Nazianz (d. 390) began his famous sermon On the Nativity, which was later incorporated into the Canon of the Nativity by St. Cosmas of Maiuma (d. 760). We can also trace the origin of our traditional Christmas greeting: Christ is born! Glorify Him! to this source. Throughout the pre-Nativity period, which in our rite begins on November 21st, we are given a glimpse of the mystery of the Incarnation as these words solemnly resound in our churches. By them we are also invited to be joyful and to exult as we

welcome into our midst Emmanuel, God with us, at Christmas time.

Saint Gregory’s words are a living testimony that already at the end of the fourth century, Christmas was celebrated by the Byzantine Church with special solemnity and rejoicing.

In Byzantine Liturgy, the season of preparation for the Feast of the Nativity was developed between the seventh and the ninth centuries—a rather late date. The forty day period of fasting before Christmas, known as the Philippine Fast (Filipovka), was established in 1166 A.D. In 1966, however, the Ruthenian Byzantine Hierarchy in the United States was granted a Rescript by the Holy See reducing this period of fasting to two weeks, December 10th to the 24th. During this time, the faithful are exhorted to prepare themselves for the coming of the Savior and to receive Him in the Holy Eucharist in order to sing more meaningfully “s Nami Boh!” – “God is with us!”

The two Sundays preceding the Nativity are liturgically connected with the Feast. The first, the Sunday of the Forefathers, is in commemoration of all the holy people of the Old Testament who completely trusted God and patiently awaited the coming of the Messiah. The second, the Sunday of the Fathers, is in commemoration of those members of the genealogy of Christ who became the carriers of the Messianic promises.

The ‘predprazdenstvo’ or the pre-festive period of the Nativity is celebrated for five days, December 20th to the 24th. In the liturgical books a strict fast is prescribed for the eve of Christmas to remind us of the hardships and privations of Mary and Joseph before the Nativity. Today, this fasting is optional, but in the spirit of our Rite at least abstinence from meat should be observed.

Characteristic of the Christmas Vigil are The Royal Hours, a liturgical devotion celebrated only three times a year—on the mornings of the Eve of Epiphany and of Good Friday besides the Eve of Christmas. They are called “royal” because they were celebrated with great solemnity and in the

presence of the royal family. Later in the day, the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great with Vespers is celebrated leaving the late afternoon and evening free for the traditional family celebration of “The Holy Supper” (“Svjata Večerja”).

2. The Holy Supper requires special preparation and setting. The dining table is lightly strewn with hay or straw and then covered with white linen. In the middle of the table, a large round loaf of white bread decorated with traditional symbols similar to the Paska of Easter and called the “Krachun” (O. Sl. Karachun-nativity), is placed between two candles which are lit during the dinner. This explains the derivation of our popular name for Christmas,” Krachun.”

This traditional setting of the Christmas table, devoid of all pagan or superstitious implications, symbolically represents the scene of Bethlehem.

The round white bread represents the newly born Savior Who called Himself “the Bread of Life” (In. 6:35); the table covered with straw or hay represents the manger in which He was laid; the white table cloth His swaddling clothes (Lk. 2:7), and the lighted candle, the star of Bethlehem. In arranging the seating, the father as the head of the household is seated at the head of the table and the family is seated around him. Besides the seating for the entire family, there is always one empty seat which is reserved for the unexpected guest for whom, in the spirit of Slavic hospitality, there should always be room (comp. Lk. 2:7).

3. Before the supper begins, the father lights the candle, symbolizing the appearance of the star, and leads the singing of the festive Troparion, “Your birth, O Christ our God” (Rozdestvo Tvoje Christe Boze Nas) with the entire family gathered around the table. He then extends his Christmas wishes in words similar to these:

“I greet you with the Feast of Christ’s Nativity and wish that the Infant Jesus shower upon all of you His choicest blessings. May we all live in health, peace, and happiness and may we all celebrate another Christmas together. A Merry and Blessed Christmas! Christ is Born!”

The father then embraces and kisses each member of the family, and as he expresses his wishes for good health and happiness, he shares a piece of bread (prosphora) dipped in honey with them. This sharing of the bread symbolizes the sharing of life with Jesus and the honey represents God’s blessings (comp. Ps. 81 :17), the source of true happiness.

Since the Eve of Christmas is traditionally a fast day, meat or meat products are never served at the Holy Supper. In many places, custom dictates that even dairy products are excluded. The traditional menu always contains meatless dishes but in great variety and prepared with great care. The meatless dishes symbolize the humility and poverty which surrounded the Birth of Christ. The variety and abundance of food represent the variety and abundance of God’s graces.

During the course of the supper, served leisurely and with a certain solemnity, there prevails a joyous atmosphere reminiscent of the angelic message given to the shepherds that first Christmas Eve: “I bring you news of great joy to be shared by all people. Today, in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, Who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:10-11). Between the servings of the traditional foods, the festive joy is enhanced by the singing of carols, the reminiscing of the family, and the telling of amusing stories. The Holy Supper is concluded with a traditional carol.

A certain after-supper ritual is generally followed consisting of carolling and the opening of gifts. It is not becoming or customary to retire early on Christmas Eve. Emulating the shepherds, all keep watch (Lk. 2:8) and then, just before midnight, all generally go to church to meet Emmanuel, “God with us!”

4. The Christmas tree is also part of the Byzantine Christmas tradition, but it is of more recent origin, finding its way into the home of the Byzantine Catholics from Germany at the turn of the last century. It also brings with it much meaningful symbolism. The evergreen tree reminds us of the eternal life brought to us by Jesus Christ, while the tree decorations remind us of His spiritual gifts and blessings. The exchange of gifts from under the tree expresses our mutual love in imitation of the infinite love of our Heavenly Father Who “so loved the world (men) that He gave His only Son, so that all those who believe in Him may not perish but may have eternal life” (In. 3:15-16).

5. Carolling is a centuries-long tradition with our people. It was introduced to us from Kiev, as were many other religious customs. In the life of St. Vladimir the Great, the Prince of Kiev (980- 1015) carolling is mentioned for the first time. The biographer states that our ancestors “during the Christmas festivities used to come together and sing joyous songs, commemorating the birth of Christ.” (Nestor the Chronicler) From ancient times, it was a prevalent custom that a group of young people, dressed as angels or shepherds, would carry a model of a star and would visit from house to house to bring joy to the inhabitants (“Dom zveseliti” ) with their carolling. These are called the Star Carollers.

Also a part of the Christmas tradition of our people are the Bethlehem Carollers. These developed from the Middle Age” Mystery Plays” (i.e., a religious drama based on the events in the life of Our Lord). Bethlehem is a pious re-enactment of the first Christmas by the shepherds and angels as the actors. Depending on the script, there can be other actors involved such as Herod, the Three Wise Men, the Devil, etc. The center of attraction of this portrayal is a small model church with the Nativity scene displayed inside. It is usually carried by two youngsters dressed as angels and placed on the table of the home visited. Around this church, the drama of the Nativity evolves with its dialogues, carolling, and music. The Bethlehem play usually ends with one of the members of the group extending Yuletide greetings and the singing of “Mnohaja L’ita” for all the members of the family. For their noble gesture and visit, the carollers are usually rewarded with goodies or monetary gifts.