

## **Father's Forum**

### **The Living God**

It has become somehow commonplace to compare the Orthodox icon of the Nativity of our Lord with the crèche, the carol singing, the Christmas decorations, etc. (not to speak of Santa Claus, Rudolf and all the rest...). In these we certainly find colour and agitation, but not true life. On the other hand, in the icon there is also movement, even a lot going on, but there is also eternal meaning: real life.

And the Nativity of our Lord is about life and about His gift of life.

From the end of December on, the time of sunlight increases: visibly, life starts coming back. It is in the middle of the longest night of the year that a light comes to us: "The people who sat in the darkness saw a great light, to those who sat in the region and shadow of death, to them light has dawned." (Is 9:1-2, quoted in Mt 4:16). Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the Forerunner, announces in his canticle the Savior's immediate coming: "...because of the tender mercy of our God by which the Orient from on high (or a 'rising sun', a 'dawn') will visit us to shine on those who sit on darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Lk 1:78-79).

You cannot help but feeling in these texts a powerful life-giving movement: The Living God, like a rising sun is coming to His creatures that are in the darkness. That's why I am often puzzled by the great emphasis and importance given by some to our God defined or considered as 'the' Being (and this occurs even in some of our own faulty liturgical translations). Certainly God is, but not in any impersonal way, be it 'The Force', the 'First Cause' or the 'Unmoved Mover'. When we translate the Old Testament name of God, YAHWEH, as "I AM THAT I AM", very soon God becomes a 'what' and not a 'who'. But in Ex 3:14 the emphasis is on I AM: "God said to Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM', and he said, You shall tell the children of Israel this: I AM has sent me to you." In the Revelation of Saint John, God is the one "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev 1: 8); and in the halo of all the icons of Christ we read «Θ êν», that is, the same name of God revealed in Exodus 3:14 as I AM, because in God Being is a Person ... He who saves us.

The Orthodox worship the Trinity of hypostases: the personal Living God. The result of putting an exaggerated emphasis on a philosophical 'essence of God' that is too easily defined, rationalized and even tamed can be seen in other Christian traditions. Not so with our living God: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Heb 10:31.

René Descartes, considered the father of western philosophy, sets the basis of his system on this famous platitude: “I think, therefore I am”. My old mentor Lanza del Vasto used to say something like: “Let us then use the time to be someone and to think something worthwhile.” And no, he was not joking.

Fortunately, another Frenchman, Blaise Pascal, a contemporary of Descartes set things right:

*FIRE.*

*GOD of Abraham, GOD of Isaac, GOD of Jacob  
not of the philosophers and of the learned.*

*Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.*

*GOD of Jesus Christ.*

*(..) This is eternal life, that they know you, the one true God,  
and the one that you sent, Jesus Christ.*

The preceding lines come from the “Memorial”, a paper found on Pascal after his death. They are, I think, vibrant with experience. And so it must be. For our God is the same One who walked in the Garden of Paradise in the cool of the day and who conversed with Adam and Eve; the same who went on the boat of the fishermen and ate with them, and the same who is now with us and in us. And we live only because He lives: “In your light we shall see the light” as we sing in the Doxology of Matins.

Our Lord Himself tells us:

*“...he who believes in Me has eternal life. Jn 6:47*

*"I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. Jn 11:25*

And my favorite: *“this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent”. Jn 17:3.*

God is. God lives. But the tragic question is: “do we...?”

For us this should be the goal and meaning of Christmas: not only to acknowledge that God lives and to worship the living God, but especially that we live ourselves. Angelus Silesius (17<sup>th</sup> century) certainly put it in a more challenging way:

*“Jesus Christ could be born a thousand times in Bethlehem but all in vain if he is not born in me.”*

And in the magnificent words of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD), one of the first fathers of the Church:

*For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God.*

*(Against Heresies, Book IV, ch. XX, 7)*

This is precisely God’s purpose and God’s joy!!!

God's glory –and Orthodoxy means precisely right glory or right glorification– is not merely that we exist but that we live truly. And if we are real, if we are really alive, it is not because of what we may think or feel or even accomplish, individually or as a Parish. We are, at best, only “unprofitable servants, for we have done what we had been commanded to do” (Lk 17:10). We are alive only because of our Lord Jesus Christ, of His love and His life given to us.

Overturing the world's ways and its philosophies, our God is telling us this Christmas feast and everyday: “I love therefore you are”<sup>1</sup>. And He is calling us to imitate Him.

Fr. Pau

<sup>1</sup> “J’ aime donc tu es” is also a Lanza del Vasto expression

## **President's Message**

Here we are, as a community again celebrating the glorious birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! What a wonderful time of year! It makes us contemplate the re-birth of our faith in Him and our relationship with others. In this year of my tenure as parish council president, I would like to examine our interpersonal relationships as it relates to reflecting Christ in our parish. When I first attended Holy Resurrection, I found this deep urge to become involved with the life of the parish. As a result, you might say, I aggressively pushed my way into that life. This is as a result of my zealous pursuit to serve in any way I could. The concept of “pushing my way in” was sad in a way in, but I felt it necessary to become part of the pulse of the church community. I must confess that in doing so, I feel I may have offended some in the process and ask for their forgiveness if I did. Although many were warm and welcoming, it seemed difficult to enter into the inner core of members that made the church run. That changed somewhat when I became part of that “inner core”.

As a result, this contemplation causes me to feel that we must examine how we in the “inner core” are treating others that perhaps want to become involved in parish life as I did. Could the way we are treating those with aspirations of being involved be keeping them from doing so? Are we willing to give up some control of direction? Are we soliciting new ideas, new approaches and welcoming new

participants? Do we welcome and encourage potential Sunday school teachers, parish council members etc. with open arms? Do we intimidate potential participants because of strong personalities or imply that there is only one view in life? And yes, I admit I am guilty as charged! This thankfully is not Christ's way!

Let those of us who are especially part of the inner core of Parish life with in our church, re-examine how we treat those who wish to be more involved. Let's allow the birth of our Lord to reflect a new birth within us, the birth of wisdom to know how to treat others in our parish to allow the seed of involvement to grow and enhance our parish life together.

### **Christ is born! Glorify Him!**

Greg Rychlo  
Parish Council President

### **Food Bank Requests**

We would like to thank those that continue to bring regular food items for the food bank. If possible please include canned milk, fruits, meats, and vegetables in your contributions. As well, pastas in any form are always welcome. Remember that all Church Council members will assist if there are persons that come to you in need. Contact Greg Rychlo or Sub Deacon James Davis for further information.

If you have someone come to you in for assistance other than food, please contact Fr. Pau or Greg Rychlo.

### **Christmas Basket Program**

The Christmas Basket Program was a rousing success. Our parish was able to assist in making Christmas a little brighter for some families within our parish. What a wonderful gift and blessing is it for the Lord to allow us to give! We pray that God bless those that have accepted the baskets and those that have given to them. Praise God for giving us the gift of giving and allowing that to grow.

Thank you to those who helped with the giving and collection of items for our Christmas baskets. Thanks be to God for instilling the ideas that came forth to augment our ability to help those of our parish that we love dearly and consider a great blessing!

## **Outreach**

Outreach is one of the areas of parish life that we want to expand. We feel there is a great need for charity in our communities and we need your help. We are looking to our sister Orthodox parishes in order to combine resources so we can be the most effective in delivering services needed by those who are requiring help. If you are interested in helping with this important venture, please contact Fr. Pau, Aggie Friesen, Chrystal Herrem or Greg Rychlo.

## **NASHI**



## **NASHI UPDATE – 2010**

NASHI is a Saskatchewan-based charitable organization run entirely by volunteers who are trying to rally activists in the fight to stop human trafficking. While NASHI is headquartered in Saskatoon and area, we are proud to announce that support groups have been organized in Edmonton and recently Winnipeg.

NASHI'S mission consists of two primary goals. The first covers our local activities to educate children, youth and the general public about child exploitation. Our second goal covers our international activities – to divert children and youth from exploitation by establishing a safe house for youth at-risk in Ukraine. Ukraine is a hotspot and major source country for trafficked victims.

Through 2010 I have met and heard the pain of girls forced into trafficking and shared the tears of a mother who knows her daughter has been trafficked but has no way of rescuing her. It is impossible not to cry when you try to imagine the future of these children. Coming face-to-face with this reality is difficult and often seems insurmountable but there is a light in the darkness.

NASHI has been and will continue to be successful in taking steps to combat this tragedy. Thanks to many of you and from Holy

Resurrection, we will soon have our own facility to begin to improve the lives of children at risk. Exterior renovations to our 12,000 sq. ft. facility are completed and interior renovations hopefully will be completed by the fall of 2011.

Together we cannot bemoan the darkness in the world but together we need to light a candle. We must look at the world with hope and love. Be a shining example in your home, your community and in our church. Let us not grow tired of giving.

What can I ask of each of you?

Continue to light a candle and support NASHI. Your gifts have enabled us to do this valuable work. Thank You

SAVELIA CURNISKI

## **Youth**

The following is a history of one of our magnificent saints, and is a most appropriate reading for this time of year. Please enjoy reading about Saint Nicholas of Myra.

Saint Nicholas was born around the year 280 AD in the city of Patra, province of Lycia(present day Turkey).

Theophanes and Nonna were his parents they were wealthy and pious Christians. The Lord revealed to them a numerous times by signs that the grace of God was truly upon their child, even at very young age.

Nicholas, as a young man was very virtuous and was inclined towards strict abstinence and a solitary life.

He attended church often and enjoyed studying the scriptures, while being directed by his Uncle, the Bishop of Patra whose name was also Nicholas.

St. Nicholas soon was encouraged by his parents towards the service of the Lord and when he had matured, he was ordained a Priest, after which he entered into a more intense ascetic discipline.

As Nicholas embraced this life of service to the Lord, he attended many vigils and was given to much prayer and fasting, thus perfecting himself in virtue.

St. Nicholas's virtuous life was being recognized by many and was soon elected the Bishop of Myra. Bishop Nicholas was known for his unwavering faith and zeal, sincere humility, meekness and gentleness, he also gave with compassion and liberality towards the needs of poor and rejected of society.

In the year 325 AD St. Nicholas attended the First Ecumenical Council and defended the Orthodox faith with such fervor as he refuted the false teaching of Arius.

There are many other such stories about this Saint of God Nicholas, he was known as was also know as the Father of Orphans, a comforter of those who suffer, the Patron Saint of Children and those who are lost at sea.

A prayer: **Holy Hierarch Nicholas pray to God for us, that our souls may be saved.**

## **Inspirational Reading**

Reflections on the Nativity our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

### **Nativity homily of St. John Chrysostom Patriarch of Constantinople, 354-407 AD:**

I behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherds' song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of Justice. And ask now how; for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, He had the power, He descended, He redeemed; all things move in obedience to God.

"But what shall I say? What shall I utter? \*Behold an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Mary is present, who is both Virgin and Mother, Joseph is present, who is called father. He is called husband, she is called wife. The names indeed are lawful, but there is no other bond. We speak here of words, not of things. He was espoused to her, but the Most High overshadowed her. Hence, Joseph, doubting, knew not what to call the Infant. He would not dare to say that It was conceived in adultery; he could not speak harshly against

the Virgin; he shrank from calling the Child his own. He knew well that here was something unknown to him; how or whence was this Child born? And being anxious because of this, there came to him a message, by the voice of an angel, which said: \*Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Spirit."

**From a sermon of St. Cyril of Alexandria, Patriarch of Alexandria, + 444  
A.D :**

"He, who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He, who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infant's bands."

"Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice: for the Son who is co-eternal with the Father, having his throne and like him without beginning, in his compassion and merciful love for mankind has submitted himself to emptying, according to the good pleasure and the counsel of the Father; and he has gone to dwell in a Virgin's womb that was sanctified beforehand by the Spirit, O marvel! God is come among men; he who cannot be contained is contained in a womb; the Timeless enters time; and strange wonder! His conception is without seed, his emptying is past telling; so great is this mystery! For God empties himself, takes flesh, and is fashioned as a creature, when the angel tells the pure Virgin of her conception: 'Hail, thou who art full of grace; the Lord who has great mercy is with thee.'"

**More on the Nativity by Saint John Chrysostom:**

I behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody but chanting forth a full heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He, who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the starts the singing of angelic voices; and in the place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of Justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, He had the power, He descended, He redeemed; all things move in obedience to God. This day He Who Is, is Born' and He Who Is, becomes what He Was Not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word, He became Flesh, His nature because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

"This day, He Who was ineffably begotten of the Father, was for me born of the Virgin: in a way no tongue can tell. Begotten according to His nature before all ages from the Father; in what manner He knows who has begotten Him; born again this day from the Virgin, above the order of nature, in what manner knows the power of the Holy Spirit. And His heavenly generation is true, and His generation here on earth is true. As God He is truly begotten of God; so also as man is He truly born from the Virgin. In heaven He alone is the Only-Begotten of the unique Virgin.

Though I know that a Virgin this day gave birth and I believe that God was begotten before all time, yet the manner of this generation I have learned to venerate in silence, and I accept that this is not to be probed too curiously with wordy speech. For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him Who Works.

And what shall I say? And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of Days has become an infant. He has decreed that ignominy shall become honour, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness. For this, he assumed my body, that I may become capable of his Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His Spirit; and so He bestowing, and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me. He gives me His Spirit that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Come and we shall commemorate the solemn festival. It is a strange manner of celebrating a festival; but truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been implanted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He has come on earth, while being Whole in heaven; and while complete in heaven, He is without diminution on earth. Though He was God, He became Man; not denying Himself to be God. Though being the impassable Word, He became flesh; that He might dwell among us, he became flesh, He did not become God, He was God. Wherefore He became flesh so that He Whom heaven did not contain a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infant's food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

Christmas Reflection - submitted by Sub Deacon James Nicholas

## **Theology for all**

(Texts submitted by Fr. Pau)

### **To start with: a Baptist!!**

Jesus and the Sinner's Prayer:  
What Jesus says doesn't match what we usually say.  
By David P. Gushee

Is it permissible to reopen the question of salvation? If we do, how will Jesus' teachings stand up to our inherited traditions? These questions came to me acutely not long ago. I was getting ready to preach. As the worship leader was finishing the music set, he offered some unscripted theological reflections. He said something like: "The only thing required of us is to believe that Jesus' blood saves us. Nothing more. It's nothing but the blood of Jesus." In my Baptist context, we've heard these thoughts a thousand times. The problem was that I had in my pocket a message in which Jesus himself had a very different answer to the question of salvation.

### The Big Question

In reading through Luke, I had discovered that twice (10:25, 18:18) Jesus is asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

In the first passage, Jesus turns the question back on the lawyer who asks it. The lawyer replies with the Old Testament commands to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love your neighbour as yourself (cf. Mt. 22:34-40). Jesus affirms his answer: "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." The lawyer then tries to narrow the meaning of neighbour. So Jesus tells the unforgettable parable of the compassionate Samaritan, who proved to be a neighbour to a bleeding roadside victim.

In Luke 18, Jesus responds to the same question, this time from the man we know as the rich young ruler, by quoting the second table of the Decalogue, forbidding adultery, murder, theft, and false witness, and mandating honour towards parents. His questioner says that he has kept these commandments, and Jesus proceeds to call on him to "sell all ... and distribute to the poor." Jesus assures him, "You will have treasure in

heaven; and come, follow me." The "extremely rich" ruler won't do this, and Jesus goes on to teach his disciples about how hard it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.

Trying to be an honest expositor of the texts in front of me, I told the chapel students that morning that on the two occasions in Luke when Jesus was asked about the criteria for admission to eternity, he offered a fourfold answer: love God with all that you are, love your neighbour (like the Samaritan loved his neighbour), do God's will by obeying his moral commands, and be willing, if he asks, to drop everything and leave it behind in order to follow him.

I concluded by suggesting that the contrast between how Jesus answers this question and how we usually do is stark and awfully inconvenient.

### Getting Radical

In my Baptist tradition, especially, we direct people to "invite Jesus into your heart as your personal Saviour," an act undertaken using a formula called the "sinner's prayer." Or we simply say, "Believe in Jesus, and you will be saved."

But Jesus never taught easy believism. Whether he was telling the rich young ruler to sell all and follow him or telling a miracle-hungry crowd near Capernaum that to do the work of God was, yes, to believe on him (John 6:28-29), he called people to abandon their own agenda and trust him radically. Radical trust calls for both belief and action.

I suggest that we tend to confuse the beginning of the faith journey with its entirety. Yes, believe in Jesus—that's the first step. Yes, invite Jesus into your heart as your personal Saviour. Then, empowered by God's grace, embark on the journey of discipleship, in which you seek to love God with every fibre of your being, to love your neighbour as yourself, to live out God's moral will, and to follow Jesus where he leads you, whatever the cost.

If Jesus is to be believed, inheriting eternal life involves a comprehensive divine assessment at every step along our journey, not just at its inception. Mediocrity and hypocrisy characterize the lives of many avowed Christians, at least in part because of our default answer to the salvation question. Anyone can, and most Americans do, "believe" in Jesus rather than some alternative saviour. Anyone can, and many Americans sometimes do, say a prayer asking Jesus to save them. But not many embark on a life fully

devoted to the love of God, the love of neighbour, the moral practice of God's will, and radical, costly discipleship.

If it comes down to a choice between our habitual, ingrained ways of talking about salvation and what Jesus himself said when asked the question, I know what I must choose.

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Now a great Father of the church:  
Oration XLV St. Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus)  
The Second Oration on Easter

XXII. Now we are to examine another fact and dogma, neglected by most people, but in my judgment well worth enquiring into. To Whom was that Blood offered that was shed for us, and why was It shed? I mean the precious and famous Blood of our God and High priest and Sacrifice. We were detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. Now, since a ransom belongs only to him who holds in bondage, I ask to whom was this offered, and for what cause? If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives ransom, not only from God, but a ransom which consists of God Himself, and has such an illustrious payment for his tyranny, a payment for whose sake it would have been right for him to have left us alone altogether. But if to the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed; and next, On what principle did the Blood of His Only begotten Son delight the Father, Who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his Father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because Humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also arranged this to the honour of the Father, Whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things? So much we have said of Christ; the greater part of what we might say shall be revered with silence. But that brazen serpent was hung up as a remedy for the biting serpents, not as a type of Him that suffered for us, but as a

contrast; and it saved those that looked upon it, not because they believed it to live, but because it was killed, and killed with it the powers that were subject to it, being destroyed as it deserved. And what is the fitting epitaph for it from us? "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Thou art overthrown by the Cross; thou art slain by Him who is the Giver of life; thou art without breath, dead, without motion, even though thou keepest the form of a serpent lifted up on high on a pole.

**And now, one of our own...**

**God's "Righteousness" Written by the Very Rev. John Breck**

*Lead-in: How are we saved? By accumulating "good works," or by receiving "imputed righteousness" in response to our faith? Maybe this traditional question, so often seen as dividing Catholics and Protestants, is the wrong one to ask.*

A Roman Catholic friend (and a good theologian) recently asked me whether the Greek Fathers of the Church understand the term "righteousness" in a forensic sense. He was referring to a Protestant doctrine that holds that God does not "make" us righteous; He "declares" or "counts" us righteous. That is, God imputes righteousness to us, while we remain in a state of sinfulness. Simul iustus et peccator, Luther would say: at once justified and sinful. Reading, for example, St Paul's letter to the Romans, my friend asked, do the Eastern Fathers also read the notion of "righteousness" forensically? Well no, I thought. But then I had to formulate something of the reason why. After a lot of stumbling, this is what I passed on to him.

The Protestant notion of "imputation," (as I understand it) grew out of the conviction that we are inherently (by nature) incapable of making ourselves righteous; we cannot become truly just on the basis of our own good deeds or merits. Insofar as the qualities of justice and righteousness are attributable to us, we should understand that God imputes them to us as an expression of His mercy. This God does so that we can re-enter the realm of His righteousness, His holiness, and thus be saved from the consequences of sin, which is (eternal) death. This interpretation, however, as many people have pointed out, means that our righteousness is little more than a legal fiction. God treats us as if we were just or righteous, although He (like us) knows full well that we are not.<sup>i</sup>

The difference between this notion and the Orthodox perspective is well illustrated by our respective interpretations of Romans 5:12. In the West, at least in the popular mind, the debate was long polarized between Catholic emphasis on salvation through “works-righteousness,” and Protestant insistence on “justification by faith (alone!).” The presupposition underlying both views is that we inherit Adam’s guilt, which resulted from his sinful disobedience to the divine commandment.<sup>ii</sup> St Augustine seemed convinced that the guilt resulting from Adam's sin is transmitted through the sexual act, from generation to generation, like some deleterious gene. This “original sin” must be removed if we are to be saved from death, to share in eternal life. The question as to how this is accomplished has received many different answers. Medieval Catholic piety held that this occurs through infused grace, which confers upon us the power to perform righteous deeds and thereby actually to become or be made righteous. This enables us to build up a “treasury of merits,” the term “merit” being understood as a gift of divine grace rather than our own accomplishment (Council of Trent, 1547). The popular notion that we are saved only if our merits outweigh our sins on the scales of divine justice is usually attributed to Roman Catholics. It is shared, nevertheless, by many Orthodox, who have failed to appreciate the fullness of God’s grace, both in enabling us to perform good works and in forgiving us fully when we sincerely repent of our sins.<sup>iii</sup>

To the Greek Fathers, what we inherit from Adam is not his sin and consequent guilt, but mortality.<sup>iv</sup> From Adam (understood, really, as an archetype), we “inherit” the sting of death. Death has spread to all of humanity, as an inevitable consequence of our fallen nature; yet each of us, under the threat of death, rebels personally against God, the Author of Life. This means that our guilt is our own; we bring it upon ourselves. (A sign in our local marina declares: “You are responsible for your wake!” How true...) Greek patristic tradition generally interprets the Pauline notion of *dikaioyne* as “righteousness,” rather than as “justice” in the forensic sense. That is, the term refers first to God's own quality of righteousness, understood more as an expression of love and mercy than as one of divine justice that must be “satisfied.” Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, followers of Christ are capable of receiving that divine righteousness as a gift – one that can actually work a transformation in human life by enabling us to pray, to wage spiritual warfare against the passions, and to love both

God and other people. Human nature (ousia) remains “fallen”; but the human person (hypostasis) is led by the Spirit on a pathway of sanctification.

In the Eastern perspective, there is no thought that we must accumulate merits in order to justify ourselves before God, although our faithful often seem (as evidenced in Confession) to feel that if we are to be saved, our good works must outweigh our sins. Nor, on the other hand, is there a denial of the place and importance of good works in Christian life (Ephesians 2:8-10!). Salvation is accomplished by grace in response to faith. But that faith cannot be passive; it must express itself, not merely by confessing Jesus as “personal Lord and Saviour,” but by feeding, clothing, visiting and otherwise caring for the “least” of Jesus' brethren (Mt 25). What we are saved from is the key issue here. Rather than view salvation primarily as a forensic liberation from guilt through imputed or imparted righteousness, we should see it as incorporation, by baptism, into Christ's death and resurrection, such that we “die and rise” with Him. Thus we are saved from Death. We are freed from this ultimate consequence of sin and guilt – but only as a divinely bestowed gift of God's ineffable love, expressed in the suffering death of His Son, a gift to which we respond with faith that issues in love. That response, through the action of the indwelling Spirit, enables us finally to share in Christ's own resurrection and glorification, attaining what the Greek Fathers call theôsis or “deification” (which means existential participation in God's life, and not ontological confusion between God and His human creatures).<sup>v</sup>

Good works should thus be understood to be a response rather than a means to salvation. And God's righteousness should be seen as a gift of loving, merciful, saving grace, rather than as a forensic tool, wielded in the service of divine judgment.

<sup>1</sup> Modern dialog between Catholics and Protestants has gone beyond this focus on inherited guilt and is concerned more with the meaning of “justification.”

<sup>1</sup> The common view of merits as a means by which we put God in our debt (never sanctioned as dogma), together with the idea of inherited guilt, has been treated well and in detail in recent Catholic reflection. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (§ 404-409), for example, makes an important distinction between original sin as a “deprivation of original holiness and justice” – which renders human nature “subject to ignorance, suffering and

the dominion of death, and inclined to sin” – and personal faults for which each of us is responsible. In this perspective, “original sin” is close to the Orthodox understanding of “fallen human nature.”

<sup>1</sup> E.g., John Chrysostom, In Rom., hom. X (PG 60:474-5); Maximus the Confessor, Quaest. Ad Thal. (PG 90:408). An excellent summary of this issue can be found in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (Fordham University Press, 1974), pp. 143-146.

<sup>1</sup> “Communion in the risen body of Christ; participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God, which penetrates true humanity and restores it to its ‘natural’ state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt – these are at the center of Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel.” J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 146.  
From the Series "Life in Christ" by Fr. Breck September 2006, Article # 1 at:  
<http://www.oca.org/CHRIST-life-article.asp?SID=6&ID=114&MONTH=September&YEAR=2006>

**Submitted by Fr. Pau**

The following is an excerpt from *Sacred Symbol That Speak* Volume 1 by Anthony M. Coniaris.

### **Christmas and Epiphany in the Early Church**

Almost until the end of the fourth century, most churches celebrated the Birth of Christ and His Baptism on the same day. The feast was called Epiphany. The rationale behind this was that both feasts manifested Christ’s divinity to the world. The birth of the Son manifested the Word made flesh, while His Baptism revealed God in Trinity.

It was during the lifetime of St. John Chrysostom that the two celebrations were separated in order to enforce the unique concept of each. In fact, in one of his sermons preached on Christmas Eve in 386, he mentions that only a few years before in his very lifetime, both feasts were celebrated together. Chrysostom mentions as one of the reasons for the separation of the two feasts the fact that during His Baptism, Jesus was manifest to everyone, whereas at His birth, He appeared in hidden form. He writes, “It is not the day when Christ was born that should be called Epiphany, but the day when He was baptized. Not through His birth did He become known to all, but through His Baptism. Before the day of

Baptism, He was not known to the people” (Orat. XV). Ever since that time, Christmas has been observed on December 25 and Epiphany on January 6. Today it is only the Armenian Church in the East that continues to celebrate the Nativity and Epiphany together on January 6. In the Western Church Epiphany has as its main objective the adoration of the Mage. In the East, the adoration of the Magi is celebrated together with Christmas of December 25.

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## **Parishioners’ Ponderings**

**Poems by Susan Syrnick**

### I Forgot to Love Thee

When day’s dew fell  
And kissed my lips to heal,  
Salt stung and sting my wounds. To cover  
I forgot to Love Thee.

I forgot to Love Thee  
When sorrow’s deadly root does take  
And shake this frame.  
With misplaced mind the garden tower,  
Kept the dragon.  
Weeds were left to flower so  
Beauty parched.

Then anguish crept  
And slept as partners.  
Buried pain in stone heart shrine.  
I forgot, so slept my partner,  
Vice and virtue came ‘entwined.

Oh bitter night! When Love does leave!  
And in its stead is dread of Thee.  
Oh bitter day! When dawn brings not

The sense or depth of thee.  
But perfect foe-  
Comes willingly.

It is I that leaves, not Thou from me.  
When vanity whips the crow's nest mast.  
With watchman bound  
Both sight and sound,  
Grow dim. Then wander thick in fog  
And soon in forest – far from home.  
But to get back, like Dante's quest,  
Is harder still.

Laying broken at Thy feet,  
I remember thee.  
What is man that Thou remembers me?  
Thy Love does overwhelm.  
Heal wounds – bring me home.  
Collapsing on Thy breast-  
Yet again.

### **In Our Library**

A Book Review by Betty Bobier on a Book From Our Church Library

**The Book:** **Dancing Alone** by Frank Schaeffer

**Theme:** The quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religion

The subtitle of the book gives us a clue to the tone of the book. Some people find the author legalistic and harsh. Of course, calling most of the present churches false religion was not exactly meant to win friends. When you tell it as you see it, some people are offended. If you have something to say, some people think it best to just say it.

I found that this book answered my questions about how we ended up with the religious divisions that plague the body of Christ in this, the third millennium. Some of the denominations are well known. We all know about the great schism between Rome and the rest of the church. Most of us know something about Luther and his break with Rome. He was reportedly only trying to force Rome

into certain reformations and expected to return to the fold. That did not work out so well.

Breaking with whatever church you were in for the sake of a new doctrine or revelation or the development of a new personality to follow seems to have been a popular occupation. That 'churches' persecuted and prosecute one another and were complicit in the deaths of other Christians is a very dark blot in the history of Christianity.

Schaeffer demonstrates how the religion of most Americans has taken on the tone of a "civil" religion. The politicians are all Christian (by their own account), the only exceptions in my memory being Obama and Kennedy. Religious leaders stand by the president, especially after he is caught in his misdeeds. Examples are Nixon, Clinton.....

I cannot enumerate the paths he takes us down, but if you are interested in the subject, this is an excellent book.

Frank Schaeffer is the son of Francis Schaeffer, the protestant theologian. He is also a Greek Orthodox Christian. He is a well known author and movie director.

*Submitted by Betty Bobier*

These are some **Good News** items that we hope interest you. If you have any comments on them or anything else in Parish life, please contact anyone on parish council. The members are: Parish Priest: Fr. Pau, Auxiliary Priest: Father Dan Guenther, Council President: Greg Rychlo, Financial: David Grier, Maintenance: Sub Deacon Neil Sedgewick, Events: Aggie Friesen, Chrystal Herrem , Members At Large: Kim Fast, Savelia Curniski.



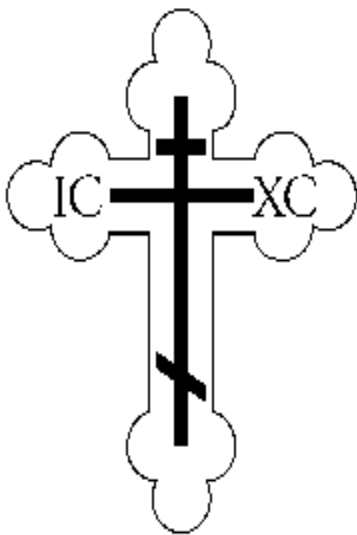
CHRIST IS BORN!

GLORIFY HIM!



# “GOOD NEWS”

Glory to Jesus Christ!  
Glory Forever!



## Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church

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Rector: Fr. Pau Ruiz-Gomar

[www.hrochurch.org](http://www.hrochurch.org)

I am the Resurrection and the Life.  
Whoever believes in me shall not die,  
But shall have life everlasting.

~ John 11:25

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