

The Shining Light

Newsletter of Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church

Nativity 2001

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Christ is Born!

By Father Michael

“Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself will be with them.” (Rev. 21:3)

The Birth of Christ is a celebration of joy. Since that first Christmas day 2000 years ago, the assurance that God is with His people has taken on new meaning. Before Jesus was born, the Israelites were assured that even in judgment they could have hope because God was with them. (Is. 8:8-10) We have a great advantage over the Old Testament saints because the birth of Christ brings the “glad tidings” that “the Kingdom of God is at hand.” We are now able to “see the Glory of

God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:6) And, we can sense His presence in all situations of life because He is made real to us by the Holy Spirit in the Church.

When we gather as Church, we experience a foretaste of the future glory that awaits us as we strive to live in fellowship with each other, to worship God together,



and to proclaim the Gospel.

How privileged we are to live in God's house! We can come to Him as our Father, knowing that He will hear and answer us. By remaining attached to Him – as a branch to a vine – we become holy. As His obedient people, we can live in security, regardless of the wars going on

around us, like sheep with a dedicated and faithful shepherd. All of this is possible because the Church is founded upon Jesus, through whose birth, death and resurrection we are cleansed of sin and made temples of His Divine Spirit. (I Cor. 6:19)

When we need to be reassured that God is with us, we need only contemplate Jesus as He is revealed in the Gospel according to the Scriptures and the life of the Holy Church. Assurance comes when we visualize Jesus' face when He took the little children, blessed them, and reminded us that we must be like them in order to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. When we think of His crucifixion, we must see His face battered and blood-streaked after the soldiers had struck Him with their

fists and had pierced the crown of thorns into His head. His birth and subsequent passion reminds us of all He endured to be our Savior. Finally, assurance comes when we remind ourselves of His promise, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)

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Glorify Him!

Pastoral Reflections Debuts Online in 2002

“Life in Christ: A Series of Pastoral Reflections” is the title of a new series of timely articles slated to appear on the Web site of the Orthodox Church in America (www.oca.org) in January 2002.

Edited by the Very Rev. John Breck, the bimonthly series will offer commentaries and observations by Father Breck and other authors on a wide variety of timely topics. The first two installments offer reflections on life after the September 11 tragedies and on the recent debate surrounding embryonic stem cell research.

“The series, which will appear on the Web site on the first and third Fridays of each month, is being offered as a ministry of the OCA Pastoral Life Unit,” according to the Very Rev. John Matusiak, OCA Communications Director. “While each installment will be pastoral in nature, the series is designed to have broad appeal among clergy and laity alike.”

Selected installments will also appear in The Orthodox Church, the official newspaper of the Orthodox Church in America.

Father Breck is a former faculty member

at Saint Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary Crestwood, NY. Currently, he oversees the Saint Silouan Retreat in South Carolina and serves as Chairman of the OCA’s Medical-Ethics Board.

Other Orthodox Web sites to note

There are other informative and useful Orthodoxy Internet sites. If you are looking for additional information about the Orthodox Church please consider these sites:

St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary (www.svtos.edu):

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America (www.antiochian.org);

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of American (www.goarch.org); and,

Orthodox TV (orthodox.tv). This site is sponsored by the Antiochian Church and contains many archived speeches and programs by and about Orthodoxy. This site requires a 54K or higher Internet connection.

SVS Trustees Elect Erickson Dean

Professor John H. Erickson was elected Dean of Saint Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary by the school’s trustees on Friday, December 14, 2001.

Professor Erickson will succeed Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko, who will retire from the office of Dean on June 30, 2002.

The election brought to a close an intense, seven-month process by the Deanship

Search Committee, chaired by Protopresbyter Robert Kondratick, Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America. HTOC parishioners Leon Lysaght, a SVS trustee, also served on the search committee.

Currently the Peter N. Gramowich Professor of Church History, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Registrar, Professor Erickson joined the seminary faculty in 1973. He is a well-known author and canonist.

OCA Starts Youth Ministry Program

In an effort to provide more effective and consistent ministry and networking among youth and young adults, members of the Holy Synod unanimously adopted the implementation of a new Church-wide youth ministry effort for the Orthodox Church in America.

The new OCA Youth movement will be deanery-based and utilize youth ministry team appointed by their respective diocesan hierarchs.

In addition, each region will conduct or participate in a local Orthodox summer camp or rally. The OCA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries also will conduct online discussions on the topics in its youth chat room.

With the assistance of diocesan youth directors, the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries will develop retreat outlines and discussion guides on the selected annual theme. The outlines will be distributed to deanery and diocesan contacts and posted on the OCA Web site every August.

Fr. Michael Cont.

As we live in this temporal and changing world filled with saints and sinners, let us keep our eyes fixed on the heavenly home which is our true destiny. As baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians, we are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, while still striving to live in peaceful unity with all God’s people. Let us continue to pray for one another and for our leaders during these tragic times. May our words and deeds always proclaim the mystery which we experience in part and for which we yearn in full: “Christ is Born! Glorify Him!”

May the Love, Joy and Peace of this Christmas Feast be with you throughout the year.

Met. THEODOSIUS Visits Russia

His Beatitude Theodosius, Archbishop of Washington and Metropolitan of All America and Canada, visited Russia Dec. 3-10 at the invitation of His Holiness Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus. Metropolitan Theodosius lead a del-

egation from the Orthodox Church in America that included Archbishop Hermann of



Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, Protopresbyter Robert Kondratik, OCA chancellor, and other clergy and laity from the United States.

“The world has gone through tremendous changes since my previous visit two and a half years ago”, His Beatitude Theodosius said addressing His Holiness Patriarch Alexy and added, “the world has greatly changed even in the last three

months. The tragic events of September 11 have changed the way of life of the United States citizens. I hope that my visit to the Russian Orthodox Church will strengthen traditional historical and spiritual relations based on faith, hope and charity. I pray that this visit may contribute to the development of relations between the peoples of Russia and the United States of America, between all people of good will.”

Welcoming His Beatitude, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy noted in particular, “The tragic events in the United States and the common decision of the leaders of our two countries to oppose terrorism together have brought our nations and states closer to each other. We see in your every visit to the Russian Orthodox Church a contribution to the further consolidation of cooperation and mutual understanding not only between our two sister Churches, but also between our two nations and states”.

Westside Fellowship To Study Marriage

The Ann Arbor Orthodox bible study and fellowship group will begin the New Year studying some of St. John Chrysostom's writings on marriage and family.

St. John Chrysostom was a prolific writer on many subjects and one of the most revered preachers in the history of the Church.

The group will use a collection of St. John's homilies, “On Marriage and Family Life” published by SVS Press, along with appropriate scripture readings to structure the discussions. The collection is available at Pascha Books in Livonia.

In addition to studying the St. John's

homilies, the group also plans a day-long retreat at Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction. The date for the retreat will be determined and the tentative itinerary includes Divine Liturgy at the monastery, lunch with the nuns and a talk from Father Roman Braga contrasting marriage with a monastic vocation.

The group meets at 5 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month at the Hinshaws home, 3626 Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor. Everyone is encouraged to bring a dish to pass at the potluck supper. Structured play time is provided for the children. For more information, please call the Hinshaws at (734) 633-0277.

Fellowship Needs Your Talents

The main objective of the Mary Martha and Lazarus Fellowship Committee is to provide an opportunity for all parish members to participate in activities that best fit their particular talents and interests.

The fellowship does this by integrating the following ministries under one “Fellowship Umbrella.” Those ministries include: Altar Ministry, Kitchen Ministry, Maintenance Ministry, Good Samaritan Ministry, Youth Adult Ministry, Evangelism Ministry, Youth Ministry, St. John the Theologian Ministry, and Events Planning

As we move into 2002, we need to develop a diverse and cohesive organization that taps into all of our talents. We welcome everybody to our meetings, which are usually held on Tuesday evenings. We need ALL members to participate and contribute as we are in need of new and creative thinking for our organization as we seek to do many things in this coming year.

If any of the above Ministries is of interest to you, please come out and attend the next meeting in an effort to learn more about the different Ministries. As Father Michael has stated many times, it is the responsibility of ALL of us to use the talents that God has given us to work for and serve our Church in the best way that we can!! Hope to see you at the next Martha, Mary, & Lazarus Fellowship Meeting!!

Please see Co-Chairs Gretchen Stinson or Scott Lovich for more information.



Worship Schedule

Great Vespers – Sat. 5 p.m.
 Church School – Sun. 9 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy – Sun. 10 a.m.
 Matins – Wed. 6:45 a.m.
 Akathist – Wed. 7 p.m.
 Confessions -- Saturday evenings following Great Vespers or by appointment

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www.geocities.com/Orthodoxy.geo

Deadline for submission is Jan. 18 . You can e-mail your submissions to Bill Nowling at nowling@prodigy.net. Time-sensitive notices should be submitted to Dorothy Zayan for inclusion in the HTOC bulletin.

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