

The Heavenly Host

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Merry Christmas!

Pastoral Message from Bishop Joseph

Christmas Message 2001

Glory to God in the highest and on earth PEACE, goodwill to all men.

Once again, we enter the blessed Advent season, when we prepare to celebrate the mystery of our Lord becoming flesh from HER who knew no man. As we approach the celebration of Christ's birth, let us take a moment to think about the meaning of this event in reference to our contemporary world. Right now, our nation is wracked with fear of violent men and our planet groans under oppressive regimes that wage wars against their own peoples and their neighbors. It is in this world without peace that we Christians remember the birth of the King of Peace. What is this peace that He promised?

First, this peace is not of this world, but from heaven. Let us remember the vision of *worldly* peace in the time of Christ. For king Herod, it was the slaughter of the children of Galilee to fend off a rival; for the Pharisees, it was the murder of an embarrassing critic named Jesus of Nazareth.

The "Peace from above" for which we pray in the Divine Liturgy is not the defeat of our human enemies, but the victory of God's mercy over the brokenness and despair of our fallenness. The Scriptures reveal that we triumph over evil with good (Romans 12:21) and that our faith and reliance on Christ is the source of victory over the devil and his chaos (1 John 2:13-14). Let us never forget the words of St. John the Apostle:

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5)

The victory of Christ is eternal: it cannot be changed. This means that no amount of human effort can change it. Whether the world likes it or not, the world and its master, the devil, have been defeated. We must accept it as fact, there is no room for negotiation. When we submit ourselves to the fact that

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Bishop's Message cont.

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Christ has overcome the world, we are obliged to let Him reign in our hearts.

Second, if God reigns in our hearts, Satan and his servants have no place there. We are no longer at the mercy of evil. Can there be anything other than peace in the heart of a true believer in Christ? Let us all welcome Jesus Christ into the manger of our desolate hearts to bring new life and God's triumph of heavenly peace.

This is the true meaning of the word "FAITH." If we have faith, then the knowledge of the Gospel message must reign in our hearts. The heart is not a place for mere sentimentality, but is the center of acceptance of our being and the source of our actions. Everything we see comes into our hearts, and so the acceptance of the victory of Christ means that we see the world in a different way. Our perceptions and our actions become that of peace. We stop scheming and start loving. We abandon defensiveness and become bold in the Name of the Lord. No one can offend or hurt us, because God has overcome all things.

Third, this victory of faith and the peace of Christ that it brings means that we are no longer at war with our family, friends and neighbors. There is no room for contention and strife in the heart of one filled with the peace of Christ. Those that seek to ridicule, to argue, to point out the flaws of others with wicked joy, these people do not know the peace of Christ. They despair, and so they fight amongst themselves and seek to drag us into their constant efforts to demean and slander others.

We Christians know that Christ has won the battle. Is there anything left to fight over? Our only struggle is to integrate the Gospel into our daily lives and participate in the work of God. Let us put away from ourselves all grudges and unforgiveness, and seek peace and unity with all our brethren. If we disagree with others, let Christ's love be our rule. Let our differences not be a source of anger, but an opportunity to learn and to teach. We cannot force others to agree with us, but we can triumph over conflict by allowing ourselves to be transformed by Christ's victory and letting His peace reign. The Lord will bring us justice, not human fighting.

By bringing the "*peace from above*" into our hearts, we can bring peace to the whole world. This is the real lesson of Advent and the Nativity it anticipates. This is the Gospel message.

In this holy season of CHRISTmas, you and your families and loved ones are constantly in my thoughts and prayers. May God grant us all true repentance and conversion.

Your Father in Christ,

+Bishop Joseph
Auxiliary
West Coast Chancery
Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America

Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!

St. Michael Church
www.stmichaelvannuys.com
DECEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Regular Services in August</i>						
<p><i>Saturdays:</i> <u>Great Vespers</u> at 5 pm in the Chapel.</p> <p><i>Sundays:</i> <u>Orthos</u> at 8:45 am & <u>Divine Liturgy</u> at 10:00 am in the Church.</p> <p><i>Confessions are arranged by appointment or prior to services.</i></p>						
	4:00 pm-Classrooms (1-6) Rented	7:00 pm-Classrooms (1-6) Rented		7:30 am-Banquet Room & Classrooms Rented	7:30 am-Banquet Room & Classrooms Rented	5:00 pm-Festival (Christmas) Kitchen & Ban- quet Room
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	4:00 pm-Classrooms (1-6) Rented 6:00 pm-Parish Council Meeting at Skaff Home	7:00 pm-Classrooms (1-6) Rented	6:30 pm-Ladies Guild Christmas Pot Luck & Meeting at Katie Nassief's home	7:30 pm-Kitchen, Banquet Room & Classrooms Rented	Teen SOYO "Lock-in" Overnight	9:00 am- Christmas Pro- gram Rehearsal 6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rented
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
11:30 am-Church School Christmas Program	10 am-Food Collection Day 4:00 pm-Classrooms (1-6) Rented	7:00 pm-Classrooms (1-6) Rented				6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rented
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 4:00 pm-Classrooms (1-6) Rented	CHRISTMAS DAY				6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rented
	7:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rented	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Schedule of Services

(The Sacrament of Confession with Absolution is available by Appointment up until 4:30 p.m. on December 24th)

The Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ
 Saturday Evening, December 22nd - Great Vespers, 5 p.m.
 Sunday, December 23rd - Orthros at 9 a.m.; Diving Liturgy at 10 a.m.

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST (Early Christmas Eve)

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
 Vespersal Divine Liturgy at 5 p.m.

(There is no fasting from December 25th to January 4th)

The Feast of St. Basil the Great
 Monday, December 31st - Great Vespers at 5 p.m.
 Tuesday, January 1st - Diving Liturgy at 10 a.m.

The Sunday After the Feast of the Holy Nativity
 And the Sunday Before Holy Theophany
 Saturday, December 29th - Great Vespers at 5 p.m.
 Sunday, December 30th - Orthros at 9 a.m.; Divine Liturgy at 10 a.m.

Forefeast of Holy Theophany
 Saturday, January 5th (This day is observed as a strict fast.)

THE GREAT FEAST OF HOLY THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY)

Saturday, January 5th - Great Vespers at 5 p.m.
 Sunday, January 6th - Orthros at 8:45 a.m.; Divine Liturgy at 10 a.m.
 Followed by the Great Blessing of the Waters

Stewardship News

Please remember to inform the office of any changes to your address or phone numbers. Thank you.

In the next few months, look for our revised Visitor Card and guest offering envelopes. If you have any ideas or helped to work on the current cards or envelopes, please contact the Stewardship committee.

Don't forget to welcome any guests to the church especially now during the holiday season. Please introduce yourself to visitors and bring them to the Community Center after services.



Other Announcements

The bookstore is open after Liturgy each Sunday. Please see Andy or Bobbie Monsue for gift ideas.

Bookstore News from Andy & Bobbie Monsue

Two new titles have arrive in the bookstore. The first is *Scripture in Tradition; the Bible and its interpretation in the Orthodox Church* by John Breck of St. Vladimir's Seminary.

The second is *The New Testament; Introduction to Luke and Acts* by Paul Nadim Tarazi. Please be sure to stop by the bookstore to see these and other titles as they arrive.

Orders can be placed as well for books, icons or other items if you don't find the items you're looking for or if they are out of stock.



Baptism towels



and baby bibs have been the most requested items lately.

Things to See and Do submitted by Carrie Skaff

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA): (323) 857-6000; Closed Wednesday.

Getty Museum: (310) 440-7300; Closed Monday. Reservations needed during the week. No reservations after 4 pm weekly or on weekends. Parking is \$5.

Norton Simon Museum: Newly Remodeled (626) 449-6840; Closed Tuesday.

San Diego Museum of Art (Balboa Park): (619) 232-7931

Bowers Museum of Cultural Art: (714) 567-3600; Closed Monday.

From the Ladies Guild

Gift certificates are available each Sunday in the Community Center. A portion of each dollar is donated to our Church and is applied to our mortgage. Buy your scrip today!

You're all invited to sign up for Holy Bread & to host a coffee hour. Please call Leila Abu-Ghazaleh for more information on open dates at (805) 522-4797.

Spiritual Bouquets: Donations are offered in memory of the deceased in lieu of flowers. If you wish to participate, please see Jeannette Aboud.

Pageant of the Masters: 45 people attended this year's event in Laguna. Make your reservations now for next year's event. Please contact Carrie Skaff at (818) 501-3477.

ST. MICHAEL ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
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Editor's Note:

Neda Toomey was the chairwoman for the Chili Cookoff. I've learned my lesson in distinguishing between she and Rima Hage. Thanks Neda for all your hard work.



Recipe of the Month

DATE NUT TORTE

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup sifted flour (sift before measuring)
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 8 oz. pitted dates (finely chopped)
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1 tsp. grated lemon peel
- 3 eggs
- 3/4 cup sugar
- Whipped cream

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking pan.

Combine flour, salt, and baking powder then sift together into a bowl. Add dates, pecans and lemon peel and mix well.

Separate eggs. Put egg whites in a large bowl and let

warm to room temperature. Put egg yolks and 1/4 cup sugar in a medium bowl and beat until thick and light. Fold in flour mixture with a rubber spatula until combined. Beat egg whites until soft peaks form when beaters are raised. Add remaining sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time, beating well after each addition.

Continue beating egg whites until stiff peaks hold when beaters are raised. Fold flour mixture into egg whites and combine well. Gently transfer to prepared baking pan.

Place pan on center rack in preheated oven and bake for 50 minutes or until the surface springs back when gently pressed with fingertips. If cake is still soft in center, return to oven to bake for a few minutes longer.

Remove cake from oven and place pan on a wire cake rack to cool completely. Cut into 4-by-2-inch rectangles topped with whipped cream.

Serves 8.