

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH

Sunday, December 21, 2025

5025 E. Mill Road – Broadview Heights, Ohio 44147

440.526.5192 - info@stmichaelscleveland.org

www.StMichaelsCleveland.org

V. REV. FR. JOHN MEMORICH
(C) 216.548.8757
frjohn@stmichaelscleveland.org

Our parish welcomes you and thanks you for joining us in worship this morning.
If you desire any information about our parish, our diocese, or the Orthodox
Church and Faith, please contact Fr. John Memorich. Check us out online or visit
our Facebook Page which is updated regularly!



CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST!

Sunday before Nativity

Virgin Martyr Juliana and her companions.

28th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 3.

EPISTLE READING

Heb. 11:9-10; 17-23; 32-40

GOSPEL LESSON

Matt. 1:1-25

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Nativity Fast

Sunday, December 21

9:30 am Divine Liturgy – LiveStream
Yolka / Brunch

Monday, December 22

Great Martyr Anastasia

Wednesday, December 24

Nun Martyr Eugenia

4:00 pm Vespers

FAST FREE WEEK

Christmas (Dec 25) to Eve of Theophany (Mon, Jan 5)

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Thursday, December 25
NATIVITY OF OUR LORD,
JESUS CHRIST

9:30 am
Festal Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour sponsored
by the 'R' Club



Friday, December 26 **Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos**

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 27

5:00 pm Vespers/Confession

Sunday, December 28 **Sunday after the Nativity**

9:30 am Divine Liturgy – LiveStream

FASTING NOTE There is no fasting from Christmas until the eve of Theophany on January 5th. However, the eve of Theophany, Jan. 5th is a **strict fast day** and should be observed like Christmas Eve.

PRAYERS, CANDLES, 7-DAY VIGILS and FLOWERS

FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF:

Toni Laverack (Health/Birthday) by John & Laurie Cook

Thomas, Ashley & Sophia Rigby (Health; 7-d) by Mom & Dad Rigby

OR THE REPOSE AND BLESSED MEMORY OF:

Alex Arkutik (Departed; Birthday; 7-d) by Christine Arkutik

Helen & Alex Arkutik (Departed; 7-d) by Christine Arkutik

Ken & Carol Milla (Departed; 7-d) by Christine Arkutik

Annette Lapso (Departed; 7-d) by Dennis Lapso

The **Flowers on the Tetrapod** are given in honor of **all** parishioners, present and departed, of **Archangel Michael Orthodox Church**.

Sunday December 21 - Altar Servers & Readers

Altar Servers: Connor Noll, Silas Foster, Isaac Foster, Alex Foster, Nicholas Gaydos, Andrew Ropchock, John Kormos, Jacob G Kormos

Reader: Nick Rolin

Thursday, December 25 –

ALL Altar servers are invited to serve

Sunday, December 28 - Altar Servers & Readers

Altar Servers: Joseph Zvara, Jacob G Kormos, John Kormos, Danny Reilly, Augustin Mindala, Andrew Ropchock, Mathias Hoffman, Lance Louie

Reader: Monica Visocky

*On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Pdn. Daniel Kovalak,
Dn. Noah Klembara, Sbd. Ben Wharton, Mat. Lu Timko,
the Woodside Staff and I, we wish all of you a Blessed Nativity
Feast and pray that the upcoming New Year will be rich in health,
happiness, and all of God's merciful blessings!*

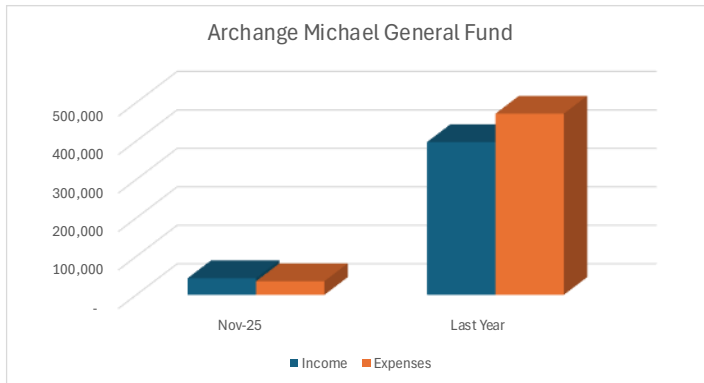
Fr. John

St. James Prayer List – December

*"The prayer of the righteous has great power in its affects"
(St. James 5:1)*

*For the complete St. James Prayer List,
please see the most recent issue of the Archangel.*

Month End November 2025 – YTD



	November	Year-to-Date
Collected	\$ 43,222	\$397,233
Required for Expenses Paid	\$ 35,490	\$470,998
Surplus/(Short)	\$ (7,733)	\$ (73,65)

As we work together to address our financial deficit, we invite all parishioners to prayerfully reflect on stewardship. Every act of support—financial, volunteer service, prayer, or advocacy—strengthens both our parish and our witness to the world.

Let us continue to be a parish that gives even in challenge, which serves even in sacrifice, and that loves without counting the cost. For it is in giving that we truly receive.

Bulletin Information (Deadline

Deadline for the bulletin is **Tuesday 12/23 - 12/noon; and Tuesday, 12/30, respectively.** Please forward any information you would like to have added to the bulletin to the church email – info@stmichaelscleveland.org or call 440-526-5192.

Thank you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jan 13 – 55+ Luncheon
- Jan 16 – Book Club Lunch 12/noon @ Michael Angelo's
- Jan 25 – ZOE For Life @ Holy Trinity OC

GIFT FROM GOD

Congratulations to **Thomas & Ashley Rigby** on the birth of their son, **Sophia Marie Rigby**, who was born Saturday, December 12th, 6 lbs. 4 oz., 20 in.

December

*Happy Birthday to you who
are celebrating this week*



Erica Kovalak	24	Gregory Muzic	26
Fr. John Memorich	26	Kristen Dotson	26

No anniversaries this week

May God grant you many years!!

Raffle – Help support St. Vladimir's Camp

It's not too late to join in! Tickets are still available for purchase, and every entry helps support **St. Vladimir's Camp**. To date, we have raised **just under \$7,000** (before bank fees and raffle prize costs).

Tickets can be purchased **online** or by **check payable to St. Michael's**. If you prefer to enter by check, please give your check to **Darlene Dimitrijevs**.

Our next drawing will take place on Sunday, January 11, 2026. Good luck and thank you for your continued support!

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

I EXTEND A huge thank you to Marge Dzmura, and her elves, who did all the church decorations for Christmas. Due to snow conditions – most volunteers could not make it. Thus, Marge took it upon herself to 'do it all' as she so often 'does it all' in so many ways around our parish and Woodside. I/We owe her a debt of gratitude and thank her for ALWAYS doing such a wonderful job! Thank you, Marge, and elves!
Fr. John

55 Plus Club – Christmas Lunch

The 55 Plus Club will hold their annual Christmas Luncheon on January 13, 2026, 11:30 AM at Woodside. Cost for members is \$10.00, plus bring a \$10 exchange gift. We welcome all 55 Plus members of the church to join our club. We meet once a month for a short meeting, lunch, and fellowship. The dues are \$10 a year. Please RSVP to Mary Jane (440-237-6284) by January 4th.

HOUSE BLESSINGS

If you wish to have your house blessed during the season of Theophany (January 6). PLEASE contact the Church Office to set up a date and time. House Blessings are done by request only.

CALLING All Book Lovers!

Our Bookclub has selected the first three books for 2026. If you are a reader and would like to take an hour or two every other month to discuss a book with other book lovers, please join us! We typically meet at church starting at 7pm and end by 9 (annual luncheon in January and summer meeting at Fr. John and Jani's house). Our schedule will be listed in the church calendar but if you want to get on our email list, please provide your email address to Matushka Jani.

- January 16th – Culpability by Bruce Holsinger – Lunch at 12 noon @ Michael Angelo's Winery
- March 20th – Gone Before Goodbye by Reese Witherspoon and Harlan Coben
- May 15th – The French Agent by Belinda Alexandra

Happy reading and see you in 2026 (or sooner 😊)

YOUR PLEDGE FOR 2026

To date we have 114 pledge cards MISSING – have you turned yours in?? if not, please do so, they are PAST DUE. To date we have received 151 pledges from over 265 distributed. Food for thought – instead of contributing to McDonald's or Starbuck's bottom line ONCE A WEEK – pledge this amount to the church – you will be rewarded in more ways than you know

..... **The impact is significant!**

To meet your 2025 pledge, the last Sunday to submit checks is December 28th. Any checks or cash received AFTER Dec. 28 will go towards your 2026 pledge. Thank you for your prayers and financial support to the parish.

NOTE: Direct payments can be made thru your bank via an on-line banking service where the bank can send the check directly to the church in a given amount on a specific date - offered for FREE vs using PayPal, which charges a 3.48% fee on each transaction you make. Contact your bank or go on-line to initiate this service.

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT

An email has been sent out to everyone who provides a report for the Annual Parish Report (Vikas). This booklet will be produced and distributed for the Annual Parish Meeting to be held on **Sunday, February 15, 2026**. If you are one of the individuals who submits a report, please do so as soon as it is ready. **Deadline is Sunday, January 11**. Thank you!

R CLUB DUES

We are excited to announce that the R Club dues have been reduced to \$45 per person! Dues for 2026 are now being collected. Please submit your payment to Karen Visocky at your earliest convenience via one of the below options:

1. Venmo: @Cleveland-RClub
2. Give cash or check directly to Karen on Sunday's

3. Mail checks payable to "Cleveland R Club" to Karen Visocky, 115 Valley Brook Blvd, Hinckley, OH 44233

We also encourage non-members to consider joining the club – it's a great time to get involved!

ZOE HOUSE TOY DRIVE

Christmas is around the corner and sometimes Zoe House is the only resource for moms of young children to "shop" for gifts. Currently the toy shelf is pretty empty. We try to accommodate children from newborn to size 5T with gently used toys, clothing, coats, books, as well as strollers, highchairs, swings, beds (bassinets to toddler) and more.

If you have toys that your children have outgrown, or if you need to make space for the new items, they may receive this Christmas, please consider donating the no longer used toys to Zoe House.

Donations can be brought to the church and left at the front door or can be delivered directly to Zoe House, 5454 State Rd. (call for an available time 216-465-9030). If you have any questions, feel free to call Zoe House. Or you can talk to Kathy Kovalak, Donna Tesar, Liz Herberth, Mary Hoffman, or Judi Wienclaw - AMOC's Zoe volunteers.



Sliding into the New Year with the Halos Youth Group – Sledding & BW3s Night!

Friday, January 2nd • 3:00–4:45 PM (weather permitting)

Bundle up and kick off the new year with some snowy fun! We'll be meeting at **Carolyn Ludwig Mugrage Park** for sledding and tubing from **3:00–4:45ish PM**. After we're done on the hills, we'll head over to **Buffalo Wild Wings (just 1 mile away) around 5:00 PM** to celebrate the new year together on a *fast-free Friday!*

Locations:

- **Sledding:** Carolyn Ludwig Mugrage Park – 4985 Windfall Rd, Medina
- **Dinner:** Buffalo Wild Wings – 5050 Eastpointe Dr, Medina

What to Bring:

- Your own sleds and tubes (we'll have extras available)
- Snow gear! (We may have a few extra snow bibs to share—please message me if you need some.)

Come for the fun, the food, and the fellowship—hope to see you there! ❄️ 🧴 🍷

Contact Sarah Mindala with questions 330-592-7153.



Check out this Gift List – items for church school.

https://www.amazon.com/registries/gl/guest-view/Y4L3U2W8RSGD?ref=cm_sw_r_apin_ggr-subnav-share_88D3XRX35226PGJB837D&language=en-US

Any questions, please reach out to
Angelika Mindala, AMOC Sunday School Director
(609) 500-2696 - theangellines@gmail.com

CANDLES & PRAYERS

Have your loved one(s) remembered or prayed for during the Liturgy by requesting Candles & Prayers. Each request includes a listing in the bulletin, the name read during the service and the specific candle you would like. A \$3 candle burns during the service; a \$15 Seven-Day candle burns all week. There are specialty candles as well (i.e., Tetrapod Candles, High Place, Altar Table, etc.). Prices for those range from \$20-\$30. Call or email the church office to submit your request – or leave it in the collection basket, or at the candle desk. Call the church office with any questions!

Health & Well-Being

Health * Birthdays * Anniversaries * Name Day * Traveling

Repose & Blessed Memory

Newly Departed * Death Anniversary * Birthday of the Departed

OUTREACH – COOKING & SERVING MEALS month to cook and/or serve dinner for the men at St. Herman's, please contact Kathy Kovalak, 440-842-6639.

Also we will be starting a list of people willing to cook a meal or 2 for one of our parishioners who might be ill, in hospital, wonderful it would be to help each other. Please contact **Kathy Kovalak** at 440-842-6639 if you are interested.

COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS – 2026

Thank you to those who have sponsored a coffee hour!

January – Samaritans	July – Senior 'R' Club
February – HALOS	August – Junior 'R' Club
March – Senior 'R' Club	September – Samaritans
April – Junior 'R' Club	October – HALOS
May – HALOS	November – Sunday School
June – 55+ Club	December – BOT (Board of Trustees)

Saint Herman's Food Drive-

It's the Season of Giving!

The Charities Committee will host a parish food drive starting 11/30 and ending 12/21. The list looks a little different because the kitchen at St. Herman's is currently being renovated. Please consider supporting St. Herman's this holiday season!!

Drop off your donations in the vestibule- Thank you!

- 10 fl oz water bottles - 24 packs
- Small bags of chips (for bagged lunches)
- Granola Bars
- Cookies (variety pack)
- Brown paper bags
- Zip lock bags for lunches
- Plastic sandwich bags
- Planters salted peanuts (grab and go bags)
- Skinny pop popcorn (grab and go bags)
- Snyder's pretzels (grab and go bags)
- Variety Keebler sandwich crackers
- Nabisco Variety Packs
- Rice Krispy Treats
- Frito Lay Boxed Variety Pack
- Welch's fruit snacks
- Goldfish crackers variety pack
- Quaker chewy granola bars

"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain."

Save the Date(s)

Wednesday, December 31

WOODSIDE EVENT CENTER

2026 NEW YEAR'S EVE

Gala

WITH LIVE MUSIC FROM PERFECT CHOICE BAND

Ring in the NEW YEAR with an open bar, delicious buffet dinner, champagne toast, balloon drop at midnight, and continental breakfast to finish the evening

DECEMBER

WEDNESDAY 31 7 PM - 1 AM

TICKETS ARE \$155.00

Buy tickets by December 20 and receive a \$10 discount at purchase (prices are per person, tax and fees will be added)

WOODSIDE
EVENT CENTER and more

5025 E. MILL ROAD
BROADVIEW HTS., OH 44147




For more details and to purchase tickets, visit: www.WoodsideEventCenter.com/new-years-eve-gala

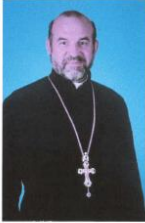
Sunday, January 25, 2026

Please join ZOE for Life!®
and
Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
for a Prayer Service as we

Pray for the Unborn
Children



Sunday, January 25, 2026
6:00 pm
6822 Broadview Road
Parma 44134
Prayer Service & Presentation
Guest Speaker Presentation Follows – 6:45 pm
Father Alexander Garklavs, Retired



Friday, January 2, 2026

SLIDING INTO
THE NEW YEAR:
SLEDDING WITH THE HALOS



JANUARY 2 • 3PM
AT CAROLYN LUDWIG MUGRAGE PARK

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH

December - 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	Greatmartyr Barbara 4	5	St. Nicholas 6
				10am-Adult Education	5:30pm-Vespers 6:00pm-HALOS @ Ropchock Home	9:30am-Divine Liturgy 5pm – Vespers/Confession
7	8	9	10	11	12	Repose of Ven. Herman of Alaska 13
9:30am-Divine Liturgy Church School Cookie Drop Off SOLOS – White Christmas Play		7pm-Adult Education	9:30am-Molieben/Samaritans Pack Cookies	6pm-FOCA Convention Meeting		5pm – Vespers/Confession
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9:30am-Divine Liturgy Church School 4 pm – Nativity Concert @ Holy Trinity/Parma	5pm-Dinner/Serve @ St. Herman's	7pm-Adult Education	7pm-Board of Trustee Mtg	10am-Adult Education		5pm – Vespers/Confession
Virgin Martyr Juliana 21	GrtMartyr Anastasia 22	23	Nun Martyr Eugenia 24	Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ 25	Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos 26	St. Stephen 27
9:30am-Divine Liturgy Church School YOLKA / Brunch			4pm-Vespers	Fast Free 9:30am-Divine Liturgy Coffee hour sponsored by the R Club	Fast Free 9:30am-Divine Liturgy	Fast Free 5pm – Vespers/Confession
28	29	Virgin Martyr Anysia 30	Ven. Melania of Rome 31			
9:30am-Divine Liturgy	Fast Free 10am-Prosphora Baking	Fast Free	Fast Free	Fast Free until Jan 5		

2025 CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

IN HONOR OF

By Natalie Boyd and Lisa Lyon Helen Sekerak
By John & Laurie Cook The Cook Family, The Blum Family, The Sipko Family, The Malinowski Family, The Laverack Family
By Family Donna Tesar, Phil & Judi Wienclaw
By Tim & Paula Gaydos Our Children and Grandchildren
By Pat Hanchuk Tim & Lisa Hanchuk & Family, Tom & Charity Hanchuk & Family, Greg Hanchuk & Sons, Ryan & Larissa Young & Family
By Liz Herberth Kristy, Steve, Nina, Andy, Ali, Mark, Jack, Libby, Monica
By Tim & Patti Klembara Matushka Olga, Julia Marie, Sophia Olga
By Dn. Noah & Mat. Jennifer Sophia Klembara, Julia Klembara, Michael Rolin, Henry George Tran
By Raymond F. Kogler, Jr. Robert Kogler, Sr., Richard Kogler, Russell Kogler, Sr., Renee Kogler Karwoski, Randall Kogler, Robert Kogler, Jr.,
..... Russell Kogler, Jr., Dawn Renee Kogler
By Bob & Mary Jane Lucak Jennifer Pishko, Chris, Greg, Robin & Nick Lucak, Patrick, Elizabeth, William Matyas
By John & Kathy Mindala Children and Grandchildren
By Patricia Patrick Ainsley & Reid Sylvain
By The Reilly Family Matushka Olga Klembara
By Mark Ropchock Andrew & Gabriel Ropchock
By Donna Tesar Melissa, Becky, Phil, Natalie, Malakai, and Malia; Michelle Michaels; Judi & Phil; Cathy, Adam, Norah & Brett; Liz, Abie & Harley
The Turk Family Gregory, Gregory, David, Nicholas, Christina, Ludmila, Nicholai, Gust, Father Theodore, Mat. Alexandra,
..... Michael, Linda, Sofia, George, Danielle, Margaret, Jerome, Allen
By Marty & Sandy Uhrina Uhrina and Linden Families

IN MEMORY OF

By Rosemary Andrews Anthony (Tom) Andrews, Helen Lucak, Michael & Jean Lucak, Vera & Ann Kormos
By John & Laurie Cook Warren Cook, Steve Sipko, Nick Sipko, Mike Yacobian, Frank Jakubec, Justine Jakubec, Judi McMullen, Brigitte Sipko
By Len & Darlene Dimitrijevs Walter Dimitrijevs, Mary Dimitrijevs, Inese Dimitrijevs, and Joan & Ronald Arhar
By Marge Dzmura Margaret, John, Joe, Michael, John & Mary Bilovecky, Michael, Ann & Andrew Kyovsk, Peter, Helena, Anna, JoLana & Joe Dzmura
By Tom & Fran Foster Frances & Michael Kopchak
By Friends Dan Herberth, Michael Snyder, Russ Harvischak
By Helen Gaborick Gaborick Family: John, Helen, William, Ida, Delight, Rick, Michael & Mary Soroka, George & Mary
By The Glagola Family Tim & Jeff Glagola, John & Margaret Glagola, Vivian Worthington, Jack & Betty Taylor, Robert Mickholtzick, Joseph Mickholtzick
By Tim & Paula Gaydos Michael & Olga Gaydos, Paul & Elaine Pavia
By Liz Herberth Tom, Dan, Mary, Andrew, Kathy, John, Eleanor, John, Debbie
By The Hornfeck Family John & Eunice Chulack
By Nancy Jackson Harvey Jackson, John & Clara Baratto, Harvey & Mary Jackson
By Tim & Patti Klembara Archpriest John, Archpriest Andrew & Matushka Marie Shuga,
..... Archpriest Stephen & Matushka Emily Shuga, Mike & Ann Klembara, Don & Patricia Grossmyer
By Tony & Gayle Klich Michael Klich
By Raymond F. Kogler, Jr. Elaine Kogler, Raymond & Sophie Kogler, Sr., Lillian (Nana) Oberst, Eva (Baba) Yerega,
..... Charles Kogler, Connie Kogler, Allen Karwoski, Zigmund & Mary Lesiak
By Robert C. Kogler Mary Ann Kogler, Connie Lee Kogler, Steve & Betty Balog, John & Helen Sopko, Eva Yerega Szabo
By Marge Kormos Don Kormos, The Kormos Family, The Plavko Family
By The Richard Kowalchik Family Richard Kowalchik, Mary Kowalchik, Richard Kowalchik, Sr., Ann Rusnak, Leo Rusnak, Catherine Duckett, Brett Bayard
By Bob & Mary Jane Lucak **Michak:** Andrew, Mary, Helen, Joseph, Anna; **Lucak:** Joseph, Helen, Michael; **Pishko:** Gale, Ann;
..... **Friends:** Dick, Tim, Joe, David, Peter, Andy, Mary, Judy, Mary Ann, Joan, Dorothy, Evelyn
By Maribeth Lucak Pdn. Dennis & Mat. Helen Lucak, Mary & Joseph Lucak, Ann, Joseph, & Peter Kostura
By John & Kathy Mindala John & Ola Mindala, Michael & Pauline Mehalik, Sam Noah
By Greg & Patty Muzic Michael & Barbara Supra, Charles & Elizabeth Muzic, Romaine Clevinger, Annie Chernesky, Catherine Chernesky,
..... George & JoLana Chernesky, David & Anna Ramsay, Alex & Julia Chernesky, Peter & Anna Supra
By Barbara Neilsen Mary & Gene Quidort, The Lucak Family: Joseph, Margaret, Agnes & Veronica
By The Reilly Family V. Rev. John Klembara, Rodney Reilly
By Dave & Sue Rigby Andrew & Mary Benyo, George & Emily Rigby, Diana Rigby, Debbie Smith
By Mark Ropchock George and Helen Ropchock
By Richard Samuhel Joseph & Mary Samuhel, Nicholas & Katarina Dorko
By Audrey Scuba Andrew & Ann Scuba
By Helen Sekerak, Natalie Boyd and Lisa Lyon Joseph Sekerak, The Kormos, Kundrat, Sekerak and Macko Families
By Gerald & Beverly Severns The Danchisin Family, The Groholy Family, The Severns Family
By The Tesar Family Frank, Don & Pauline Harley, John & Anna Morilak, Stephan Morilak, Michael & Mildred Herzak,
..... Jerry & Marie Michaels, Karen Harley-Reynolds
By Rebecca Timko & Gabrielle Palladino Koban/Timko Family, Millie/Monak Family, French/Palumbo Family; Argie/Palladino Family
By Thomas, Fedonhk, & Leibold Family Anna, Anthony, & John Fedonhk
By The Turk Family Mikalaj, Maria, Sophia, Ivan, Joseph, Joseph, Beatrice, JoAnn, Wade, Leon, Brita, Tammy, Gust, Dorothy, Nicholai
By Marty & Sandy Uhrina John & Ola Mindala
By Carol Verovich Elaine Kogler



December 25, 2025
12/001

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, beloved children in the Lord,

When it was time for thy coming upon earth, the first taxation of the world was held; and then thou madest ready to enroll the names of all who believed in thy birth. For this cause Caesar published such a decree, since thy timeless and eternal kingdom was newly made manifest.

– St. Germanus, Doxastichon at the Praises, tone six

Christ is born! Glorify him!

In one of her most famed hymns, the venerable Cassia draws parallels between the reign of Caesar and the reign of Christ: “When Augustus reigned alone upon earth,” she says, “the many kingdoms of men came to an end,” and when Christ was born in that reign, the many gods of the nations were done away. As the many cities of the world passed under one rule, all the nations came to believe in one God.

The relationship between these two reigns, two rules – that of Rome and that of Christ – goes beyond poetic parallels, however. Divine providence arranged for the birth of the Lord at precisely the right moment, when the Pax Romana, the peace secured by the ascendancy of the Roman Empire, ensured that the Good News of Jesus Christ could travel freely throughout the Mediterranean world, from Jerusalem to Italy, to Gaul and North Africa, and beyond it, to barbarian lands and the Persian Empire.

At the same time, we must not forget the role played by Roman rule also at the end of the Savior’s earthly life, when the Lord gave himself up for the life of the world: he was flogged by Roman soldiers, condemned by a Roman governor, pierced by a Roman lance. In the end, it was a Roman officer who recognized what had taken place: “Truly this was the Son of God.”

Roman imperial authority paved the way for the coming of Christ in the flesh and made possible the apostolic preaching of the Gospel; this same authority sentenced God himself to death. Thus, Rome occupies an ambivalent place in the tradition of the Church; as a symbol, it is bivalent. On the one hand, we speak of the New Rome and the Third Rome: the reign of Christ established on earth in Roman garb. Our bishops, with their eagle rugs and their sakkoi, still bear the trappings of Eastern Roman emperors.

On the other hand, in New Testament—in St. Peter’s first epistle and St. John’s Apocalypse (1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 17–18 et passim)—we see Rome equated with Babylonian harlotry, with the old Jerusalem that kills the prophets and rejects those sent to her. Rome appears both as the city of God on earth and the supreme city of the world, the dominion of the flesh and of the devil.

However, St. Germanus of Constantinople, in the doxastichon I quote above, offers a new and higher perspective. He does not only draw parallels, as does St. Cassia; neither does he assign Roman rule an incidental, albeit providential, role. Instead, he views Rome as the direct instrument of God: “For this cause Caesar published such a decree,” so that the kingdom of God might appear and Christ might enroll his faithful in the book of life. Whatever else Caesar’s decree may have done, whatever Caesar may have intended, the cause for that decree was determined by God, and it was part of his holy design, his plan; God’s providence was the agent, the decisive factor.

When God made the world out of nothing, he did so in order that the world might come to know him and love him, and so that he could show his love to the world—so that he could love the world. This does not apply only to the world as an abstract whole; it applies to each of us, who are microcosms, little worlds unto ourselves. God loves each of us with his whole love; in love, he made everything for each of us—for me and for you. As St. Paul says, “all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:21–23).

All of history points toward the coming of Christ; all the actors on the world stage, all the empires of men, all the civilizations from furthest antiquity to the end of the world: all of this has existed, exists, and will exist solely for the sake of his First and Second Coming. Moreover, since his Coming was for our sake—not his own, since, in his divine aseity, he has no need of anything—this means that all the world exist for us, for each of us—for me and for you. All of history took place, takes place, will take place, for your sake.

Rome stands as a potent symbol of all this history, of the entire world of human events. Thus, it is inevitable that Rome both serves as a vehicle of the Gospel and an instrument of the Passion, both as an ally and an enemy of Christ. The Church, in her earthly sojourn, has known the two aspects of Rome as well: the Rome of Diocletian and the Rome of Constantine; the Rome of the catacombs and the Rome of the Hagia Sophia.

So, it is in our own lives. Sometimes the circumstances of life bring us joy, sometimes they bring us pain. But no matter what happens to us, we must know, as the great spiritual testament attributed to St. Seraphim of Vyritsa says, that all of this was from the hand of the loving God. Every weal, every woe, every ease, every hardship: all of this was from him. Without all these events, known and unknown, past, present, and future, you would not be who you are. All of this is a gift from God to you, so that you could receive a still greater gift: God himself.

Today he appears as a newborn Child in the arms of his most pure Mother; soon she shall bear him to the temple of sacrifice, and thence to exile in Egypt. Thus, both in happiness and in trials, let us imitate her in always extending to him our heart’s embrace. Holding him close, we will come to understand, with St. Germanus and St. Seraphim, that everything that has taken place, from the very beginning of time, has happened so that we could come to this moment, to this cave, to this manger, and experience the Advent of God in the flesh. Everything has happened so that he could be ours, and we could be his.

To our infant Savior, the Creator and Sustainer of all, the true Love of our hearts, our deepest Desire, the Fulfillment of our being: to him be all love and adoration, together with his Father and his All-holy Spirit, throughout the ages of this world and unto endless eternity.

Greeting you with the joy of Christ’s Nativity,
With my primatial prayers and blessing,

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

**NATIVITY MESSAGE OF
THE MOST REVEREND DANIEL
ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST**

To the Clergy, Monastics, Faithful and Friends of the Diocese of the Midwest

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

Beloved Sons and Daughters in Christ,

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

I greet you all in the joy and peace of Christ as we gather with family, friends, and our fellow believers to celebrate in the bright light and brilliance of the Nativity of Our Lord!

The liturgical texts of the Feast of the Nativity are filled with references to light and darkness. From the text of the troparion of the feast, quoted above, to the words taken from the Prophet Isaiah, *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light* (Isaiah 9:2), and in many other scriptural and liturgical texts, we are reminded that Christ, the Light of the World, was born into this world as the Light which extinguishes all darkness, the darkness of sin and of death, and the darkness experienced in human life. Even one of the season's most popular carols reminds us of this. In *We Three Kings*, we hear the refrain, "Oh star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright, westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light." The **Perfect Light** of which we sing is Christ Himself.

Throughout these past forty days, we have been preparing ourselves to celebrate the cherished and bright feast of the ***Birth in the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ***. through its fasting discipline, its call to prayer, the exhortation to reach out in love to a needy world, and its appeal to participate more fully in the Divine Services, the Church has called us to reflect more deeply upon the relationship between darkness and light that we encounter in various spheres of human life — principally in the areas of our physical, spiritual and moral life.

During the most recent days of this year's period of preparation for the celebration of our Lord's Nativity, we have been witnesses to an increase in the powers of darkness extending around the globe. Violence, continuing wars, the hateful and senseless taking of innocent human life, brutal social upheaval, and the attempted destruction of the moral order, among other influences and efforts, have been experienced around the world in so many different and intense ways in these past few weeks and days. However, whether by the taking of one human life, the attempt to harm or destroy a people or peoples, or a movement to destroy the moral order, these are all an exercise of darkness trying to overtake the light. This, however, is ultimately impossible. The Light — the Light of Christ — will always illumine and bring brightness, order, and peace. The Light that shone in the darkness of the night of the Savior's birth will always overcome the darkness. The Light of Christ will always shine through and overcome the darkness of this world. This is good news, the good news we now celebrate.

I invite you all to join with me in pondering and celebrating this great mystery of the Birth of Christ. Our communal celebration of the Lord's Nativity offers us the opportunity to pause and reflect upon the Mystery of the Incarnation: that God became man, took upon Himself our human flesh and human life, was Incarnate of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit and **became man**. This is not only a celebration of Christ's birth, and neither is it merely a time to ponder the depths of the mystery of the Incarnation — it is much more. It is also a profound proclamation, the Good News, that *light has entered the world's deepest night*. The Birth of Christ proclaims that no darkness is too mighty or too powerful for Christ's light to penetrate it. Just as the star guided the wisemen from the East, so the light of Christ, the Perfect Light, guides every individual who is willing to seek after Him. May we, too, be guided by His Light.

May the Light of Christ shine brilliantly in your hearts and homes as you gather with family and friends to celebrate this bright and joyous feast. Be assured of my prayers for you and all your loved ones.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

With love in the Incarnate Son of God,

DANIEL
Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest