

Sunday, Dec. 21, 2014: The Sunday before the Lord's Nativity (The Lord's genealogy)

Epistle reading: Hebrew 11: 9-10, 32-40:

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Gospel reading: Mat. 1:1-25:



This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose

mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the

father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah. Joseph

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

On major Feastdays, it is customary in the Orthodox Church, to have the event announced the Sunday before and then to conclude it the Sunday after. Such is the case with the Feast of the Lord's Nativity. The gospel is, first of all, establishing the historic reality of Christ's existence, according to His human nature, by presenting the book of genealogy, starting with prophet David all the way down to Joseph and the Virgin Mary.

In the second part, the gospel is relating to us the way the birth of our Lord and Savior actually took place. The mystery of Christ's conception, which caused confusion in the mind of Joseph, is revealed by the angel of the Lord who explains to him that he is part of the divine plan: "*Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*"

In the incarnate Son of God, all the prophesis of the Old Testament are fulfilled: *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

Let us give thanks to our loving God for being faithful to His promise to send us a Savior, His only-begotten Son, the greatest gift, as the ultimate manifestation of His providence and infinite love for mankind!

Merry Christmas to all!

Fr. George Bazgan

Sunday Fellowship

**The fellowship for this Sunday is going to be
a Pot-luck.**

Please bring a covered dish!

Thank you all very much!

THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

**The traditional annual Christmas Party will be held
this year on December 21 in the main Hall,
following the Divine Liturgy and regular fellowship.**

All children are welcome!

Bible Study

**During Advent, a program of Bible Study
will be held on Fridays at 7:00 PM.**

Vespers Service

During the Christmas Fast, Vespers will be celebrated every **Saturday at 5:00 PM.**

Following the Vespers Service, Confession will be heard for those who want to prepare for Holy Communion.

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR MESSAGE

The Board of Directors and the Ladies' Auxiliary of our parish extend to all members and supporters of our Church their best wishes for a peaceful and

MERRY CHRISTMAS
and a healthy, peaceful and
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

NEW YEAR'S PARTY

Would you like to celebrate the arrival of 2015 at the Romanian Center, in a traditional Romanian atmosphere?

Then **contact Liviu Sasu at 780-489-5381** for tickets (\$100/adults and \$20/children 7-14), and additional details.

MEMBERSHIP

**We remind you that the membership contribution
hasn't changed in the last few years:**

\$100/person (\$200/couple).

**We encourage everyone to pay their membership
as soon as possible!**

**Keep in mind that \$35 of each membership
goes to the Archdiocese.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

HOUSE BLESSING

**On January the 6th we celebrate the Epiphany (Theophany), the
Baptism of our Lord and Savior. Following the Divine Liturgy and the
Greater Blessing of Water, Fr. George will begin the blessing of homes.**

**Those who are interested, please sign in the sign up sheet or call
Fr. George at 780- 473-0029.**

Membership or Contribution?

Spiritually speaking, we become members of the Church (the mystical body of Christ) when we receive the Sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion, which unite us with Christ (*"Do you unite yourself unto Christ? I do"*). Saint Paul the apostle says: *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?"* (I Cor. 6:15). So, since we are united with Christ, we are also united with the Church, His body, which He Himself established.

The Church is a divine-human institution, established by Christ, the Son of God, who was God (divine) and Man (human) at the same time and in the same person. The mission of the Church is to teach, sanctify and lead her faithful to salvation: *"And Jesus came and spoke to them (the apostles), saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Church as a human institution/community was established on the day of the Pentecost, when three thousand people were baptized: *..."and that day about three thousand souls were added to them"* (to the apostles) (Acts 2:41).

From the very beginning, the Church was supported materially by her faithful/members, as we read in the same Book of Acts: *"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need"* (4:32-35).

Since **the churches in North America and their priests don't receive any material support whatsoever from any government**, it is imperative that those who have been accepted into the community of the faithful (the Church) as spiritual members, contribute with their time and money, thus reaffirming their membership to the divine-human institution, the Church, and assisting her to continue her mission in the world.

It is for the reason of this double membership (spiritual and material) that the term **membership** is the appropriate one as opposed to **contribution**.

Fr. George Bazgan

A Christian's conduct in Church

Before I begin to address the topic of „church conduct,” it is important to address the question „Why do we come to church?”

We come to church on Sundays (the Day of the Lord) in order to reaffirm our vocation as liturgical beings, to continue our spiritual growth and to strengthen our communion with Christ and His Church which began when we were accepted into the community of the faithful through the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Christmation and Holy Eucharist (Communion).

For an Orthodox Christian, attending the Divine Liturgy is not only a privilege but an obligation as well. It is a privilege in as much as we, as members of the visible Church are called to bring the Eucharistic elements (bread and wine), be part of their transformation into the Body and Blood of Christ and then, partake of them in the form of the Holy Eucharist, all this in the context of the Divine Liturgy, the highest form of prayer we can offer to God. It is also our obligation to attend the Divine Liturgy, obeying thus one of the commandments of the Church.

In order to benefit the most from our presence in Church we must keep in mind a few rules:

1. We should to come to Church on time (before 10:00) in order to partake of the entire Divine Liturgy.
2. If the service is already in progress, we must stop and see what is going on. If we came in during the Scripture readings (Epistle or the Gospel), we should wait at the back of the church until the reading is over and then, quietly, take our seats.
3. We should pick up the liturgical books and follow closely the service, reading all prayers.
4. During the Divine Liturgy we are not allowed to talk to other people. We can do that at the end, during the fellowship.

Fr. George Bazgan