

Sunday, Dec. 22, 2013: 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 common participation.**

Please bring a covered dish!

Thank you all very much!

Food Collection

**A food drive for the Food Bank is under way
at our church until December 22.**

**Please bring nonperishable goods and deposit them
at the entrance of the church!**

May God Bless Your Generosity!

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.**

THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY



The traditional annual Christmas Party will be held this year on December 22 in the main Hall, after the Divine Liturgy and the Potluck fellowship.

Following the program, presented by the Sunday School children, Santa Clause will arrive with gifts.

All children are welcome!

CHRISTMAS 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 and

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

SILENT AUCTION

A silent auction will be organized on Sunday, December 22, 2013 in the Fellowship Hall. The goal is to raise funds for the ongoing major projects at the church.

The top items which people can bid on are four original framed oil paintings by Bogdan Constantin from Romania. Each painting is valued at \$300, which is below the market value in Romania.

NEW YEAR'S PARTY

Would you like to celebrate the arrival of 2014 at the Romanian Center, in a traditional Romanian atmosphere? Ten contact Viorel Ciocan at 780-994-2304 for tickets (\$80/adults and \$15/children -7-14), and additional details.

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

At the Annual General Meeting, held on February 24, 2013, the decision was made to keep the membership contribution unchanged: \$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!

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