

Dec. 29, 2013: The Sunday after the Lord's Nativity (The flight into Egypt)

Epistle reading: Gal. 1, 11-19:

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother."

Gospel reading: Mat. 2, 13-23:



"Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

First, let us focus on the first two sentences of the Epistle reading: *"But I make known to you, brethren, that **the gospel which was preached by me** is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it **came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.**"*

St. Paul the Apostle makes clear to his readers from two thousand years ago, as well as to all readers of every generation throughout the two millennia, the fact that the Gospel is God's message communicated to the people under the divine inspiration. Being of divine origin, the Word of God (Gospel) is infallible and permanent, meaning that it is applicable (valid) for every generation until the second coming of Christ.

When I say that the message of the Gospel is valid for every generation I don't mean that it has to be presented (manipulated) in such a way as to accommodate the whim of every generation but rather that each generation must conform itself to the Gospel.

The Gospel reading for this Sunday is about the Holy family's flee to Egypt in order to avoid the destruction of the newly incarnate Son of God by Herod the king: *"**Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.**"*

I would like to draw a comparison between Herod's rage against the Son of God and some of our contemporaries who share in the same kind of rage against Christianity and against God and display their diabolic determination to destroy the divine inspired Word of God (the Gospel) and any notion of God from schools, the minds and practices of the people. Sadly, some of our **contemporary herods** are the politicians who invoke a self-imposed political correctness in order to achieve their goals. The result is a secularized society and a desacralized individual, devoid of any sense of personal responsibility, discernment and moral values, practically a robot who behaves under the influence of unprecedented violence spewed out by the Hollywood movies and the videogames available to the youngest of our children. No wonder then, that from time to time we hear about demonic outbursts from such individuals who kill innocent people without any remorse and respect for life.

Following the example of the Holy Family, let us take refuge under the protection of the One, Holy, Catholic (Universal) and Apostolic Church, where the whole family (parents and children) can grow spiritually in the infinite love of God the Father who gave His only-Begotten Son for the salvation of mankind!

Fr. George Bazgan

Sunday Fellowship

The following families are scheduled to look after
this Sunday's fellowship:

Ștefan & Suzana Dinică
Ștefan & Adriana Mocanu
Vasile & Ștefana Mocanu

Thank you all very much!

NEW YEAR'S PARTY

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

SILENT AUCTION

A silent auction is underway at the church (December 22 - 29, 2013). 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.

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