

relations with one another, what is missing is God Himself, a third and divine-human Person to purify and heal our imperfect and broken relationships. Whether it be husband and wife, brother and sister, or larger communities, true love and abiding peace can only be found through our communion with God.

In our Orthodox context, this takes place through the Divine Liturgy and through our efforts to nurture the sacrificial love of God in our own hearts. “Paradise begins on earth through love for God and love for our fellows. In this lies the entire wealth of eternal life, for man has been created to give eternal glory to God. His delight is to return this glory to His image, man, who then returns greater glory to his Creator.”

Today’s feast is a reminder that it is through this cycle of glorification and love between God and man that we find our true fulfillment. May the new-born Christ grant us the courage to keep His love in our hearts, to connect with our fellows through prayer, sacrifice, and humility, and to remember that, no matter the degree of our own brokenness or the brokenness of the world, Christ has come to give us hope for renewal, “for what He was, He has remained, true God: and what He was not, He has taken upon Himself, becoming man through love for mankind.”

With love in the New-Born Christ,  
+ *Tikhon*  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

## Rector’s Letter, December, 2017

Dear brothers and sisters:

The year 2017 has come to a close, and 2018, a new year, begins. We celebrate in the evening, going into the night, to say goodbye to the old year and welcome in the new. You simply cannot have New Year’s Day without New Year’s Eve — the celebration includes both halves of a united whole.

The celebration of New Year’s Eve, though a civil occasion, teaches us the importance of evenings to mornings in our own worship. Our modern tendency is to think in terms of calendar days.

But New Year’s Eve follows an older, less artificial rhythm, where one day ends with the setting of the sun, and a new day begins. “And there was evening and there was morning, one day” — so the first day of creation is summed up in the Scriptures: evening and morning, one day. There is much wisdom in this ancient rhythm, which takes stock of what has passed and thinks ahead to what must be accomplished in the coming day. Our ancestors would rise from sleep already prepared by thoughts and prayers of the evening before.

The worship of the Church naturally falls into this same rhythm of evening and morning, one day. The eve of a feast is inseparable from the feast itself. If we think of Pascha, it becomes ob-

vious. What would Pascha morning be without its eve? The same is true throughout the year: worship in the morning depends upon worship the evening before.

Vespers, that evening worship, allows us to close out the old day and welcome in the new. It allows us to celebrate the “gladsome light” that we enjoy after the setting of the sun, which reminds us of the presence of the Light, our Savior Jesus Christ, in even the darkest times of life. Vespers is when we hear the vast majority of the hymns of our faith, hymns which teach and inspire us with the Resurrection, the saints, the feasts and seasons. Vespers is the primary opportunity to reflect on our lives and repent of our sins in Holy Confession, and so turn anew to purity of life.

The Divine Liturgy is a glorious celebration, but it is not complete with only the morning service. The word “liturgy” means “work.” How are we to enter into the great Work of God and humanity together, if humanity skips half of it? What would creation be if “there was morning, half a day”? Only when we have brought the whole of the day, with the whole of our lives, into this unity of purpose are we able to commune fully with God.

Obviously, for some of us, the norm is not possible. If some of us are absent for a cause worthy of blessing from any part of this whole cycle of worship, then it is the responsibility of the rest of us to lift them up in prayer, to bring them along in spirit into communion with God. Those

to all of us that “heaven and earth today make glad prophetically” and angels and men “keep spiritual feast for God, born of a woman, has appeared in the flesh to those that sit in darkness and shadow.” The light that we receive today is not merely a physical light that pierces the gloom which surrounds us, but rather a transfiguring light that both reveals God’s love for us and inspires us to grow in our love for God.

There is no philosophy or ideology that can overcome the irrationality of the world. It is only the transfiguring light of Christ – His divine and sacrificial love – that can accomplish this. It is only through love that we can, with the animals and the manger, “accept Him who by His Word has loosed us dwellers on earth from acts that are against reason.” When we despair at the tragedies in the world and in our lives, let us remember that it is precisely in the midst of such darkness that the Word of God chose to be incarnate.

Archimandrite Zacharias suggests that “when we are confronted by the ruins of human love and find ourselves completely broken, then two solutions can be given: either we turn to God with our pain, so that God enters our life and renews us, or we continue to be deceived by our human plans and slide from one tragedy and barrenness of soul to another, hoping that one day we will find perfection.”

The world longs for authentic love but seems to remain mired in the global tragedies that we witness every day. In our horizontal and human

## Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon Nativity of Christ 2017



### Christ is born! Glorify Him!

My beloved brethren and blessed children in the Lord,

As we come to the end of the civil year, we reflect back on a period in which tragedy, acts of terrorism, shootings in public spaces, political confusion, and sexual misconduct allegations dominate the news. The darkness which enshrouds the world adds to the burden of our personal and family struggles: addictions, estrangement, divorce and all manner of conflict wrought by human passions. We might be tempted to wonder how love could have so definitively fled from the hearts of human beings.

The feast of the Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ is a reminder

of us who are able, let us not hold back from participating as fully as possible in our worship. Come to Vespers! We were created in the beginning to celebrate evening and morning without end: to offer praise and receive divine gifts in return. Let's not miss our own party!

Yours in Christ,

*F. Julius S. Mosher*

# ΑΩ

## Around the Parish

Our brother in Christ **Joseph Gucwa** fell asleep in the Lord last month. May his memory be eternal!

Thank you to everyone who worked faithfully to **prepare for the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord**: cleaning and decorating the church, all the aspects of our Christmas flowers, our choir, our altar servers, and all the details attended to behind the scenes. May the Lord bless you.

We begin January with the **Feast of the Theophany** ("manifestation as God") of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, on Jan. 6. We celebrate that,

when our Lord was baptized in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended upon him and the Father proclaimed that Jesus was his Only-Begotten Son. Though in America it is overshadowed by Christmas, the Theophany is at least as important to us as Christians. We will celebrate **Vespers of Theophany, with the Great Blessing of Water**, on Friday, Jan. 5, at 6 PM. On Saturday, Jan. 6, we will celebrate the **Divine Liturgy of Theophany, with the Blessing of Harbor Brook** (on the far side of City Park).



With the Theophany and the Blessing of Water, we enter the **season of house blessings**. Our homes need this spiritual “spring cleaning” each year to free them from the remembrance of sin and fill them with the presence of the Holy Spirit. All that is required is that you prepare a list of the living and departed that you wish to commemorate, and set up a candle and bowl of holy water before an icon. (Fr. Joshua brings holy water, too, in case anyone needs more.) Please sign up for a time on the sheets provided at the candle desk, or contact Fr. Joshua if none of the times are convenient.

As a “Christmas present” to the church, new **church banners** were donated by the Uliase family in memory of the Butcka-Uliase family and the Petrosky-Hanley family. May their memory be eternal!

The **Brotherhood of SS. Peter & Paul** is planning to celebrate the installation of new officers on Sunday, Jan. 14, with a pancake breakfast. May God grant their members many years!

Please remember that, if severe weather conditions force **church service or event cancellations**, announcements will be posted on WFSB (channel 3) and WNBC/WVIT (channel 30), as well as on our own parish website: <[www.sspeter-paul.org](http://www.sspeter-paul.org)>.

### ***Looking Further Ahead***

The feast of **the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple** is Feb. 2. This is the day when our Lord Jesus Christ was brought into the temple as a forty-day-old child by his parents. There the Righteous Simeon testified that he saw the promised salvation of Israel fulfilled: “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation....” We sing his prayer of thanksgiving at every service of Vespers.

We will observe the Meeting of the Lord with Vespers & Liturgy at 6 PM on Thursday, Feb. 1.