

# Rector's Letter, January, 2019

Dear brothers and sisters:

Christ is born! Glorify him! There is a beautiful hymn of the Nativity of Christ, which asks,

What shall we offer you, O Christ,  
who for our sake have appeared on earth as a man?  
Every creature made by you offers you thanks:  
the Angels offer a hymn; the heavens, a star;  
the Wise Men, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder;  
the earth, its cave; the wilderness, a manger,  
and we offer you a virgin Mother!  
O Pre-eternal God, have mercy on us!

There is so much to be said about this heartfelt thanksgiving: how it's a description of the traditional icon of the Nativity, how the Virgin Mother Mary represents us all as our Champion Leader, how it makes clear who Jesus Christ is. But for now, I want to focus on one simple idea: "every creature made by you offers you thanks."

It's a bold idea: earth and heaven, plants and animals can offer thanks to God. But humanity's special role is to give voice to the rest of creation. The story of creation is that we were placed at the head of material creation not to consume it for our selfish pleasure, but to care for it and give thanks through every aspect of creation.

Consider the beeswax candles we light in church: it takes 10,000 bees working three days, visiting 20 million flowers to make ten pounds of

honey and just one pound of beeswax! So we depend on the bees and the flowers to make a prayer offering to God, whenever we light a candle in church. Take time to reflect on that wonder, and give thanks with all creatures.

Yours in Christ,



## Around the Parish

We held our **annual meeting** last month. Thanks to all the members of last year's parish council. In particular, we are grateful to Rick Comshaw and Tim Tassmer, who are stepping down after years of faithful service. And may the Lord bless and guide all those elected for this coming year.

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!

**New Year's Day** is also a feast celebrated in our church: **The Circumcision of the Lord, and the feast of St. Basil the Great**. This day commemorates the eighth day from the Nativity of the Lord, when he was actually given the name "Jesus." The Church still has prayers for the Eighth Day of a child's birth, to name that child

before God. Come celebrate the feast and pray for the new year, with Vespers & Liturgy at 6:00, Monday, Dec. 31.

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 spoke to affirm to all that Jesus Christ 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 Saturday, Jan. 5, at 5 PM. On Sunday, Jan. 6, we will celebrate the **Divine Liturgy of Theophany, with the Blessing of Harbor Brook**.

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. Just 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.

The feast of the **Meeting of the Lord in the Temple** is on 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 at 6 PM on Friday, Feb. 1, and Liturgy on Saturday at 9:30 AM.

On Super Bowl Sunday, February 3, 2019, the Events Committee will host our special **“Super Bowl” luncheon** after Divine Liturgy. The cost is \$10.00 per person. Children under 12 are free. Please see the enclosed flyer for details.

We are conducting a year-end **parish inventory of keys**. Please speak with Alexia Tassmer (atassmer@sbcglobal.net or 203-284-0856) so she can record each parish key in your possession. You may also return unneeded keys to her.

## **A note on parish safety:**

Our parish abides by a code of conduct that expects adults to interact with unrelated children at our church in plain view and always with other adults present. We also expect everyone to follow common-sense safety standards. Our community has kept this standard very well, but if there is ever a concern about safety, please bring the matter to the attention of Fr. Joshua, the parish council president, or a member of the parish council, so that it can be addressed appropriately.