



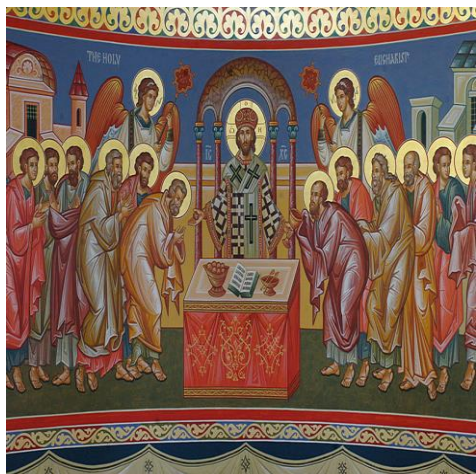
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Facebook page: *DormitionKelowna Parish*: <https://www.facebook.com/dormitionkelowna.parish.5>

Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of New Westminster: www.nweparchy.ca



28th SUNDAY after PENTECOST on December 5th, 2021 A.D.

28^{ma} НЕДІЛЯ після ЗІСЛАННЯ СВЯТОГО ДУХА

“Being Christian is living and witnessing to faith in prayer, in works of charity, in promoting justice, in doing good! The whole of our life must pass through the narrow door which is Christ!”

– teaches, reminds, and strongly emphasises Pope Francis 1st today

**Christian Greetings: Glory to Jesus Christ! – Glory to Him Forever!
Slava Isusu Chrystu! – Slava na Viky! Слава Ісусу Христу! – Слава на Віку!
Christ is among us! – He is and will be!**

**THE VIBRANT PARISH - A PLACE TO ENCOUNTER THE LIVING CHRIST:
Through the Word, the Holy Mysteries & Prayer, Serving One's Neighbour, Leadership,
Fostering & Serving Unity and Missionary Spirit.**

– Pastoral Letter of His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk

Prayer During the Coronavirus Outbreak:

Lord, Our God,

We thank you for the life that is your gift,
For the providence that sustains us,
And for your wisdom that directs the course of our days.

The threat of an infection of coronavirus is upon us today.

This disease causes fear among us and has claimed lives.

We humbly beg you, loving Lord,

Dispel our fear and deliver us from this and other diseases.

Heal those who are afflicted and stop the spread of the virus.

Strengthen us in charity to care for one another.

For You are a God of mercy, kindness, and love, and we glorify

You Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever.

Amen.

Молитва у Часі Спалаху Коронавірусу:

Господи, Боже наш,

Дякуємо Тобі за життя, яке є Твоїм даром,

За провидіння, яке нас підтримує,

І за Твою мудрість, яка спрямовує хід наших днів.

Сьогодні перед нами загроза зараження коронавірусом.

Ця хвороба викликає страх серед нас і забирає життя.

Ми смиренно просимо Тебе, люблячого Господа,

Розвій наш страх і позбав нас від цієї та усіх інших хвороб.

Вилікуй тих, хто страждає, і зупини поширення вірусу.

Зміцнюй нас у благодаті, щоб ми дбали одні про одних.

Бо Ти - Бог милосердя, доброти та любові, і ми прославляємо

Тебе Отця, Сина і Святого Духа, нині, і повсякчас і на віки вічні.

АМІНЬ.

Please contact Fr. Pavlo if you want to have the Divine Liturgies celebrated in your special intentions, such as: In Thanksgiving for Favours Received, the Infirm, General Intentions, Repose of the Deceased, Help of the Holy Spirit, for the Travelers, Students, Workers, etc. In case of emergency phone (250) 299-7249. If you would like to come to Confession, meet with the parish priest individually at the church or parish office, receive spiritual care and support via telephone or internet, want him to visit you, your relative or friend at their home, hospital or care homes, please, call or email the pastor in advance to arrange time and a day.

Liturgical propers in English language:

Tone 3, text from book “*The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*”; **pages 93-95**

Epistle: A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians: (Col. 1:12-18)

Brothers and Sisters, giving thanks to the Father for having made you worthy to share the lot of the same saints in light. He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His Beloved Son. Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, principalities or powers; all were created through him, and for him. He is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being. It is he who is head of the body, the church; he who is the beginning, the first-born of the dead, so that primacy may be his in everything.



Gospel: (Luke 14:16-24)

Jesus told this parable: “A man was giving a large dinner and he invited many. At dinner time he sent his servant to say to those invited, ‘Come along, everything is ready now.’ But they began to excuse themselves, one and all. The first one said to the servant, ‘I have bought some land and must go out and inspect it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen and I am going out to test them. Please excuse me.’ A third said, “I am newly married and so I cannot come.’

The servant returning reported all this to his master. The master of the house grew angry at the account. He said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

The servant reported, after some time, ‘Your orders have been carried out, my lord, and there is still room.’ The master then said to the servant, “Go out into the highways and along the hedgerows and force them to come in. I want my house to be full, but I tell you that not one of those invited shall taste a morsel of my dinner’.”

At the conclusion of every Divine Liturgy, we say an additional prayer for peace in Canada and in Ukraine, and healing of the World let us pray: Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

Літургійні частини Українською мовою:

Глас 3, текст з книги "Божественна Літургія Святого Івана Золотоустого"; ст. 92-94

Апостол: До Клосян послання Святого Апостола Павла читання: (Кол. 1, 12-18)

Браття і Сестри, дякуйте Богові й Отцеві, Який зробив вас гідними мати участь у спадкоємстві святих у світі, Який вирвав нас із влади тьми і переніс у царство Свого улюбленого Сина, в якому маємо відкуплення і прощення гріхів. Він образ невидимого Бога, первородний усього створіння, бо в Ньому все було створено, що на небі і що на землі, видиме і невидиме: чи то престоли, чи господства, чи начала, чи власті, все було Ним і для Нього створене. Він раніш усього, і все існує в Ньому. Він також голова тіла, тобто Церкви. Він початок, первородний з мертвих, щоб у всьому мав першенство.

Євангеліє: (Лк. 14, 16-24)

Сказав Господь притчу оцю: "Один чоловік справив вечерю велику й запросив багатьох. Під час вечері послав він слугу свого сказати запрошеним: Ідїть, усе готове. Тоді всі вони однаково почали відмовлятися. Перший йому сказав: Поле купив я, мушу піти на нього подивитись; вибач мені, прошу тебе. Другий сказав: П'ять пар волів купив я і йду їх спробувати; прошу тебе, вибач мені. А інший мовив: Я одружився і тому не можу прийти. Повернувся слуга й розповів це панові своєму. Розгнівався тоді господар та й каже до слуги свого: Іди щоскоріш на майдани й вулиці міста й приведи сюди вбогих, калік, сліпих, кульгавих. Поне, – озваєсь слуга, – сталось, як ти велів, і місця є ще. Сказав пан до слуги: Піди на шляхи та огорожі й наполягай увійти, щоб дїм мій наповнився. Кажу бо вам: Ніхто з отих запрошених не покуштує моєї вечері."



THANK YOU VERY MUCH! ЩИРО ВАМ ДЯКУЄМО!

Gratitudes to all our parishioners, guests, visitors and all Christian people of the good will who by their kindness share time, talents and treasures, help to clean inside and outside our church building, and every person who knowingly or unknowingly for the other people thoughtfully make donations, volunteer by making delicious food, changed Altar Linens, cleaned up and beautifully decorated our church for Christmas celebrations, and help our parish community in various ways and projects inside and as Christian missionaries reaching out outside our parish by keeping and sharing their Christian love, respect and unity in Christ by looking after and graciously supporting our Christian, Catholic Church communities!

DONATIONS! Amid Covid-19 outbreak causing these difficult and challenging times we continue to rely on your generosity! **Please continue to support our parish financially by e-transfer (it is a direct deposit, no security question is needed) via dormitiontransfer2020@gmail.com or mailing a cheque payable to Dormition of the Mother of God Ukrainian Catholic Church 1091 Coronation Ave., Kelowna, BC V1Y 7A8** Thank you for your support and care at this uneasy time for us all.

"Remember, O Lord, those who bear fruit doing good works in Your holy churches and remembering the poor.

Send down Your mercy upon all of us!" (A Prayer from the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom)



CONGRATULATIONS!

ЩИРО ВАС ВІТАЄМО!

May the Almighty God bless in good health and salvation in many, happy and blessed years of life to Dr. Nadia Popil on her birthday (Dec. 6th), Mr. Kenneth Lindstein on his birthday (Dec. 6th), Ms. Shelly Zemlak her birthday (Dec. 9th), Mark Fedorov on his birthday (Dec. 9th), heavenly patron's name-days, and to every person celebrating birthdays, name days / heavenly patron's feastdays and any other special anniversaries this week Mnohaya i Blahaya Lita / Many Blessed Years of Life!

NEWS and ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SUNDAY CATECHISM SCHOOL: "And they were bringing to Him also the infants, in order that He may be touching them; but after the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, Let alone the little children to come to Me, and cease hindering them; for of such is the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:14) We are happy to welcome all children to our Dormition of the Mother of God parish catechism program.

We want your children to learn more about their orthodox faith in the Catholic Church, sacred scripture, feast days, icons, tradition, singing and religious practices and customs of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. "We will start catechism classes this Sunday, September 19 for ages 4 to 12. Older children are very welcome to volunteer their help with the younger children and their efforts will be recognized and rewarded. Each class will start after Communion during the English Liturgy and end just before the beginning of the Ukrainian Liturgy. We will be following protocols similar to those used in our elementary schools. Individual snacks and learning materials will be provided. We are looking forward to meeting our parish children and providing a safe, fun, and interesting experience in learning about our Catholic faith. If you have any questions or concerns, please email Marilyn Daulat at marilyn_daulat@hotmail.com or call at 250-801-7538. Z Bohom! Marilyn Daulat" If you have any questions, please, do not hesitate to contact our parish catechism teacher Mrs. Marilyn Daulat or pastor Rev. Fr. Pavlo Myts.



LIVE STREAMING of church services from Dormition of the Mother of God Ukrainian Catholic Church in Kelowna, B.C.:

<https://www.facebook.com/dormitionkelowna.parish.5>

You can also view 24 / 7 many inspiring videos, articles, pictures, etc. are regularly published by the pastor. Please visit our parish Facebook page: *DormitionKelowna Parish*: <https://www.facebook.com/dormitionkelowna.parish.5>

Please also welcome to visit our Cathedral Facebook page for live-stream videos of the liturgical services at Holy Eucharist Cathedral: <https://www.facebook.com/holyeucharistcathedral/>

Your spiritual father-pastor is praying privately for all of you daily! Please pray for one another and especially for those who are ill, suffering or being affected by disasters, following Covid-19 Pandemic safety plan, participate via facebook streamings and other on-line church services, stay healthy and safe! Let us be responsible to ensure that we all stay safe and healthy.

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/restrictions?utm_campaign=20201118_GCPE_AM_COVID_1_NOTIFICATION_BCGOV_BCGOV_EN_BC_NOTIFICATION#social-gatherings

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US BY PRAYING TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD AT THE CHURCH AND ON-LINE! Wishing you and all your dear ones to be guided by the Holy Spirit, blessed with joy, peace, good health, unity, and Christian love today and always!

Daily Liturgical and Sacramental Services celebrated during this week:

Sunday, December 5th at **8:15 a.m.** Rosary: (**Services in Kelowna, BC**)

at **9:00 a.m.** The Divine Liturgy: *God's blessings for all our parishioners, family members, all relatives and friends* (in Eng. and Ukr.)

Annual Christian Celebration of Saint Nicholas Day will take place at our parish after one bilingual Divine Liturgy today on Sunday, of Dec. 5th, 2021 A.D.

at **6:00 p.m.** Vespers



Why Go To Church?

- One cannot avoid this moral duty and go on unaffected. When one stops participating in Sunday service:
- He loses the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- His conscience soon becomes deadened
- This leads to a deterioration in attitudes and conduct

Mon., Dec. 6th (**Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker**) at **10:00 a.m.** The Divine Liturgy: *God's blessings for all our parishioners, relatives and friends*

at **12:30 p.m.** Moleben to the Emmanuel

from **1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.** Confession / Sacrament of Reconciliation

Thurs., Dec. 9th (**Immaculate Conception of The Blessed Virgin Mary**) at **10:00 a.m.** The Divine Liturgy: *God's blessings for all our parishioners, relatives and friends*

Saturday, Dec. 11th at **3:40 p.m.** Lectio Divina / Bible Studies: (**Bible Studies and Church Services in Penticton, BC**)

at **4:00 p.m.** The Divine Liturgy: *God's blessings for all our parishioners, relatives and friends.*

Sunday, December 12th at **8:15 a.m.** Rosary: (**Services in Kelowna, BC**)

at **9:00 a.m.** The Divine Liturgy: *God's blessings for all our parishioners, family members, all relatives and friends* (in English.)

at **11:00 a.m.** The Divine Liturgy: *God's blessings for all our parishioners, family members, all relatives and friends* (in Ukrainian)

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR: Lucy D., Janet F., Volodymyr P., Ivan L., Ray Saranchuk, Cameron V., Rose Ostopowich, Keyton

A., Shelley M., Kathleen S., Chelsea M., Carmella M., Bernard M., Darrin M., Kit C., Shirley C., Olga Kuzyk, George Dashkewytch, Kay Initski, Kalyna Kociuba, William Shuya, Maria Pylypchuk, Bronie Huska, Peter Huska, Roma Nowakowski, Barbara and Vincent Pasternak, Lorraine Turcotte, Dr. Nadia Popil, the Hillman Family, Joseph Stetch, Rosa Maria Santos, Anita N., Ron and Verna Shoemaker, Jonas and Anne, Alyssa and Adam, Mark and Asia, Karen Feniuk, Volodymyr Melnyk, Shelley Zemliak, Ron Horon, Adeline Sorochuk, Taras Hryb, relatives of The Burachok Family, Aretta Manion and The Family, Rev. Fr. Pavlo Myts and The Family, and all members of our Christian parochial family and those who are not able to join actively in our community, your families, relatives, friends and neighbours; governments and armed forces, especially the shut-in or those in the hospitals, traveling, working or studying, nursing and senior homes, seeking God's answer to their prayers or those rejoicing with God's answer; your spiritual fathers, those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries; those called to their eternal reward and for the family they leave behind; widows and widowers, orphans, homeless, those who love us and those who hate, use & hurt us; and all people who have asked us pray for them. Please, also in your kindness keep praying those daily for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Remember to ask for special blessings to all Christian families and yourselves! **REMINDER** for families of individuals, who are admitted to hospital - If you or a family member is admitted to hospital and you wish to have a priest visit, please be sure to have someone call our parish rectory office to make this request. Your pastor may have no other way of knowing that you are in hospital, as privacy legislation.

SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN AWARENESS: *Dear parishioners, if our brother or sister in Christ, who usually sits next to you, is not in the Church today, please phone him / her and ask how he / she is doing. Let him or her know that our parish community misses his or her at the church very much and prays for them daily! We also pray for the people of Ukraine, that with the help of the Holy Spirit, they may obtain social peace, political harmony and economic stability: Lord, hear us and have mercy.*

Basic Guidelines for Reception of Holy Communion: You are a member of the Catholic Church (faithful of the Orthodox churches are very welcome to receive Holy Communion); 2) You have participated in the Sacrament of Confession at least during the Easter or Christmas seasons this past year if not more frequently; 3) You attend Divine Services regularly; 4) Your lifestyle is consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church; 5) You have kept the Liturgical fast – no food at least one hour prior to the Divine Liturgy (water and medicine does not break the fast). 6) You have been in church from the beginning of the service, or at least heard the Gospel. 7) To the best of your ability, you are in the state of Grace. *If for any of these or other reasons you cannot receive Holy Communion, you are very welcome to come for a blessing. Please indicate to the priest that you would like to receive his blessing.*

Pastoral and Sacramental Ministry: **Baptisms:** by appointment. **Marriages:** six months' notice should be given to the parish priest, and he should be contacted before any other arrangements are made. **Reconciliation:** by appointment. **Holy Communion:** for the sick, by appointment, any time. **Holy Unction** (Anointing of the Sick): Those anticipating surgery, hospitalization or treatments and who would like to receive anointing (by appointment, any time). **Funerals and Memorials:** by appointment.

Devotional Services to Blessed Martyr Vasyl Velychkovsky: Every Wednesday at 7:00 pm(CDT), Live-Streaming on the YouTube Shrine Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Og0D2DhlpU> Website: Bishop Velychkovsky National Martyr's Shrine: <https://bvmartyrshrine.com/>





YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT OF OTHERS: After each Divine Liturgy and every church service, please, keep silence in the House of the Lord as some of the faithful are still praying at the church as well. In consideration of other Christians, please do not leave any items in the pews. Let each of us do our part to be true stewards of our parish church by helping to keep the church building safe and clean. Thank you very much for your understanding, help and care! **Please always remember that we come together to the church to glorify Lord Our God and spiritually grow as a Christian community and church as house of prayer helps us during our temporal life journey.**



VIBRANT PARISH PRAYER: O Lord Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, as you once gathered lost sheep that they might hear Your voice and be your flock, so also today graciously look down from heaven upon our parish community, and send down on it your Holy Spirit, that it might be a place to receive the joy of Your Good News. Strengthen us with your presence, and always gather us together in prayer. Grant us the spirit of serving others, so that in our parish all might encounter You, the merciful God. Bless our spiritual leaders with Your wisdom, and inspire us to generously give of our time, talents and treasure for the building up of Your Kingdom. Unite us in peace and harmony, as befits Your community of love. Instill in us a missionary spirit, and let our parish community shine with the light of the Gospel, with prayer and good works, inviting all to share in the divine life, so that Your Name, O Saviour, may be praised, together with Your eternal Father, and Your most-holy, good and life-giving Spirit. Amen.



МОЛИТА ЖИВОЇ ПАРАФІЇ: Господи Ісусе Христе, Пастирю Добрий, як колись Ти пригорнув заблуканих овечок, щоб вони пізнали Твій голос і були Твоїм стадом, так і сьогодні глянь ласкаво з небесних висот на нашу парафію та зішли на неї Твого Святого Духа, щоб вона була місцем пізнання радості Доброї Новини.

Скріплюй нас Твоею присутністю та єднай нас кожночасно в молитві. Даруй нам духа служіння ближньому, щоб у нашій парафії кожний міг зустріти Тебе, милостивого Бога. Благослови наш духовний провід Твоею мудрістю і дай, щоб ніхто з нас не шкодував ні часу, ні талантів, ні матеріальних дїбр для розбудови Твого царства. Єднай нас у мирі та злагоді, щоб ми були Твоею спільнотою любові. Всели в нас місійного духа, щоб ми стали тим світилом євангельського слова, молитви і добрих дїл, що кличе кожного до участі в Божественному житті, щоб славилосся, Спасе, Твоє Ім'я з безначальним Твоїм Отцем та пресвятим, благим і животворящим Твоїм Духом нині, і повсякчас, і на віки віків. Амінь.



On behalf of our church family, assurance of our prayers and deepest sympathy are to Mr. Edward and Mrs. Marian Kaskiw, all their relatives and friends! **May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ place our sister in Christ Mrs. Nellie Kaskiw's soul in the place where all the saints abide, and may her memory be everlasting with the Lord and our prayers! – Vichnaya Pamyat'!**



On behalf of our church family, assurance of our prayers and deepest sympathy are to Mrs. Irene Gasser, Mrs. Sonia Romanyshyn, Mrs. Lydia Gudz-Zagaliouk, all their relatives and friends! **May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ place our sister in Christ Mrs. Olga Romanyshyn's soul in the place where all the saints abide, and may her memory be everlasting with the Lord and our prayers! – Vichnaya Pamyat'!**

There will be a collection for Christmas flowers today on Sunday of December 5th, 2021 A.D. The collection basket will be located in the Vestibule. Please, support this wonderful annual project.



If you wish to help or have any questions, suggestions, ideas about our parish community life, please, contact our parish executive council chairperson Mrs. Yvonne Crawford. Email: Donoharmclinic@gmail.com or phone: 250-212-4899

JOIN OUR CHURCH CHOIR: Do you enjoy singing? Please consider joining our Dormition Parish Choir and remember that we are looking for new members! Contact Mrs. Lesia Achtymichuk for more information and details.



Traditional and Very Delicious Ukrainian Food is available for sale at our parish: Kovbasa / Garlic Sausage - \$ 10.00 per ring, Cabbage Rolls – \$ 8.00 per dozen; Perogies – \$ 8.00 per dozen; Apple, Rubar, Strawberry Pies - \$ 10.00 each. If you need more information or to place your order, please contact Mrs. Alice Pelechaty at 250-763-4870 or Mrs. Olena Fedorov at 778-821-0759.



Holy Resurrection Parish Christmas dinner will be after the Divine Liturgy on December 11th at the white spot restaurant in Penticton, BC. For anyone who wishes to participate, there will be a \$20.00 gift exchange. Please advise Mrs. Veronica Chernetsky if you will be attending.



FAITHFUL GIVING ... Please, remember that we never take a day off or a vacation from God, or from our obligation to attend Divine Liturgy on Sundays and Holy Days. When traveling, working, participating in different sport's tournaments, activities or studying, please, make sure you check out the service schedule for the area churches at our eparchial website: www.nweparchy.ca and attend the Divine Liturgy. Remember as well, that while parishioners may be away and on vacation, the parish-church is not. Expenses continue as they do throughout the year. Please, remain consistent in your gifts to parish. Your weekly Sunday offering is important to our financial well-being. If you are away, we appreciate it when you forward your "make-up" donations. The financial stability of the parish counts on regular Sunday contributions. **Please, continue to be supportive, positive and generous!**



Rev. Fr. Pavlo Myts is taking his last part of this year vacations from Dec. 7th to Dec. 17th, 2021 A.D. In case of emergency, please, call his mobile phone: (250) 299-7249

Rachel's Corner: "I have to say it was my abortion too, not just hers. An abortion takes a child out of your life, and the abortion took my child out of my life, so I can say it was **my** abortion too." - RP
It can be so healing to finally say out loud... "It was my child too." Join other men who also grieved the loss of their child due to an abortion decision, and by receiving God's healing on a Rachel's Vineyard Retreat, they have found great peace. info@rachelsvineyardkelowna.com
www.rachelsvineyardkelowna.com f Rachel's Vineyard Kelowna: 250-762-2273



Since 2012 the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of New Westminster has been collecting funds to help underprivileged and orphaned children in Ukraine through our Christmas Candle appeal. Our fundraising program, "Christmas

Candle/Різдвяна свічка is part of a larger global appeal sponsored by Caritas Ukraine. The appeal is once again taking place for the month of December and we encourage everyone to remember these children during our Christmas season with a donation. Donations can be made at any Ukrainian Catholic Parish in BC or mailed and payable to the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of New Westminster and clearly marked with “Christmas Candle Project” on the envelope and cheque. For more information, please contact Dana Koren Lupynis, Natalia Lupynis or Emelia Lupynis at nweparchy.christmascandle@gmail.com and follow us on Facebook at [Caritas “Christmas Candle/Різдвяна свічка” Campaign, sponsored by NWEparchy](#). **When you take – you fill your hand, When you give – you fill your heart.**

Why do we fast before Christmas?

The time of preparation before Christmas is intended to be a time of purposeful asceticism, almsgiving, and learning to say yes to God while saying no to our own desires.

But Christmas, and especially in present day America, has become a time of great anxiety and materialism, despite the fact that most every song one hears, most every retail ad one reads, and most every film that is produced—with “Christmas” as a theme—will try to convince us that it’s a time for warmth, joy, spending time with family, and even taking a break from the regular hustle of everyday life. *If only* this were the case.

On the contrary, Christmas — a period of time that seems to grow longer and more arduous by the year — is preceded by ominous social media status updates that lament: “I can’t believe it’s already November ... Christmas is just around the corner,” or “My children won’t stop bothering me about [insert the latest gadget here] ... I can’t wait until Christmas is over,” and so on. Many will also complain: “Wow. I am not ready for Christmas. Where has the time gone?” This grief and anxiety should not be. No, we have certainly missed the purpose of this feast — and the time of preparation and fasting that precedes it — if all we can do is approach it with stress and sorrow.

As I mentioned above, the time before Nativity — Advent (or “Coming”) in the West, and the Fast of St. Philip the Apostle (due to its beginning on the eve of this Saint’s feast) or simply “the Nativity fast” in the Orthodox Church — is intended to be utilized for one’s Spiritual benefit (and indeed, for the life of the world), not for remorse or regret.

The Nativity fast dates to the year 1166 A.D. and a synod at Constantinople, where our fathers inaugurated a forty-day period of fasting and preparation before the annual celebration of Christ’s Incarnation. This period of forty days is analogous to the forty days that Moses fasted before receiving the commandments from God.



Of this connection, Saint Symeon of Thessaloniki (ca. A.D. 1381–1429) writes: *The Nativity Forty-day Fast represents the fast undertaken by Moses, who — having fasted for forty days and forty nights — received the Commandments of God, written on stone tablets. And we, fasting for forty days, will reflect upon and receive from the Virgin the living Word — not written upon stone, but born, incarnate — and we will commune of His Divine Body.*

If nothing else, then, the time of prayer and fasting before Nativity reminds us that we, as Orthodox Christians, are given the immense and unthinkable blessing, privilege, and honor of receiving the very Body and Blood of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. But as we say yes to Christ in the holy mysteries, we must also learn to say no to ourselves, making a point to both follow Christ and serve those in need. It is no

coincidence that Christ, in one of the Gospel readings during Nativity exhorts: “Whoever does not bear his cross” as well as “forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:27, 33). While the faithful prepare to receive Christ anew in his Incarnation, we must also be prepared to relinquish whatever it is we possess that keeps us from the glory of his everlasting kingdom.

But even as the faithful are called to a period of spiritual quietude and even asceticism during this fasting period, we should not engage in asceticism and bear this cross as an end unto itself. Rather, we learn to say no to ourselves so that we can say yes to God. And in saying yes to the poor and the needy, we are saying yes to Christ, so that we might share in the vision of Cornelius, hearing: “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4). An effective remedy for the anxieties and desires of this time of year is found in a concern for our fellow man. Rather than being so caught up in the materialism and “me too” nature of contemporary celebrations, orthodox Christians should play a pivotal role in showing a wholly better and more noble way forward.

Incidentally, the other Gospel readings throughout the Nativity fast remind us not only why we are participating, but also how we can make the most out of it. For example, we should not lay up treasure for ourselves, while neglecting God (Luke 12:16–21), but should rather be “rich” towards God — and by consequence, towards those who are in need. We should not make excuses when it comes to serving or helping those in distress (Luke 13:10–17). And, of course, we should be willing to “sell all that [we] have and distribute to the poor” (Luke 18:22).

It’s in these virtues, and in a genuine concern for others, that we can be released from the empty cares of this world, especially as they are emphasized during the holiday season. If we give to the poor, we are giving to God. If we say no to our own desires, we can fulfill the needs of those who are looking for someone — *anyone* — that is willing to say yes on their behalf.

As families, we can help our children give or donate to a family, friend, or even a complete stranger in need, rather than providing them with more and more stuff. As individuals, we can honor the fast, spend more time in prayer, and make a conscious effort to love our neighbors as ourselves, dedicating this season to be a time for true, spiritual growth. We can practice the religion of St. James that is “pure and undefiled” before God: “... to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:27). Instead of overeating for the next month, spending countless hours at parties and other premature celebrations, we can fast from our regular intake of food so that we have more time and resources to give to those who are truly in need—not to mention more focus and attention for prayer and spiritual growth.

Rather than approaching this Nativity season with anxiety and distress, dedicate yourself to the *true* spirit of the season and the greater purpose that lies within: the salvation and healing of the world through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis teaches about Life

07.01.16 Holy Mass, Santa Marta 1 John 3: 22 - 4: 6

“John writes that all who keep his commandments ‘abide’ in God, and God in them. This ‘abiding’ in God is like the breath and the manner of Christian life. Thus we can say that “a Christian is one who abides in God”. John also writes in his letter: “by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us”. Therefore, a Christian is one who ‘has’ the Holy Spirit and is guided by God. We abide in God and God abides in us by the Spirit which he has given us. Then the problem comes. Be mindful, ‘do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God’. This is precisely the rule for daily life which John teaches us.

Therefore, we should “test the spirits”, but what does it mean to test the spirits? It seems as if they are ghosts.... However, that is not the case, because John tells us to “test the spirits in order to gauge where they come from: to gauge the spirit, what is happening in my heart”. Thus, “it leads us there, to the heart”, to ask ourselves “what is happening, what do I feel in my heart, what do I want to do? The root of what is happening now, where does it come from?”.

This, is testing in order to ‘gauge’. Indeed, the verb ‘gauge’ is the most appropriate verb to truly determine “whether what I feel comes from God, from the spirit that enables me to abide in God, or if it comes from the other one”. Who is the other one: “the antichrist”. After all John’s reasoning is simple, direct, I would say circular, because it turns on the same topic: either you are of Jesus or you are of the world. John also takes up what Jesus, too, asked of the Father for all of us: not to take us from the world, but to protect us from the world. Because worldliness is the spirit which distances us from the Spirit of God that enables us to abide in the Lord.

Okay Father, yes it is all clear, but what are the criteria to truly discern what is happening in my soul? John offers only one criterion, and he presents it in these words: ‘By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit’ — every emotion, every inspiration that I feel — ‘which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God’.

In other words, the criterion is that Jesus has come in the flesh, the criterion is the incarnation. This means that I can feel many things inside, even good things, good ideas, but if these good ideas, if these feelings do not lead me to God who has come in the flesh, if they do not lead me to my neighbour, to my brother, then they are not of God. This is why John begins this passage of his letter by saying: ‘this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another’.

We can make many pastoral plans, conceive of new methods for drawing people close, but if we don’t take the path of God who has come in the flesh, of the Son of God who became man in order to walk with us, then we are not on the path of the good spirit. Instead what prevails is the antichrist, worldliness, the spirit of the world.

Yes, how many people do we find in life who seem spiritual, but who do not speak of doing works of mercy? Yet why is this? Because the works of mercy are precisely the concrete sign of our confession that the Son of God has come in the flesh: visiting the sick, feeding those who do not have food, taking care of outcast. We must perform “works of mercy”, therefore, because each of our



brothers and sisters, whom we must love, is the flesh of Christ: God has come in the flesh to identify himself with us and, and one who suffers is Christ who suffers.

Hence, if you take this path, if you feel this, you are on the right path because this is the criterion of discernment, so as not to confuse feelings, spirits, so as not to go down a path that isn't right.

Returning then to the words of John: 'do not believe every spirit' — be mindful — 'but test the spirits to see whether they are of God'. For this reason, "service to the neighbour, brother, sister who is in need — there are so many needs — of advice or of a listening ear: these are signs that we are on the path of the good spirit, that is, on the path of the Word of God who has come in the flesh".

Ask the Lord for the grace to be well aware of what is happening in our hearts, what we prefer doing, that is to say, what touches me most: whether it is the Spirit of God, which leads me to the service of others, or the spirit of the world that roams within me, in my closure, in my selfishness, in so many other things. Yes, let us ask for the grace to know what is happening in our hearts.

18.09.16 Angelus, St Peter's Square, Rome

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C [Luke 16: 1-13](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today, Jesus invites us to reflect on two opposing ways of [life](#): the way of the world and that of the Gospel — the [worldly spirit](#) is not the spirit of Jesus — and He does so by recounting the parable of the unfaithful and corrupt steward, who is praised by Jesus, despite his dishonesty (cf. Lk 16:1-13). We must point out immediately that this administrator is not presented as a model to follow, but as an example of deceitfulness. This man is accused of mismanaging his master's affairs, and before being removed, astutely he tries to ingratiate himself with the debtors, condoning part of their debt so as to ensure himself a future. Commenting on this behaviour, Jesus observes: "For the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light" (v. 8).

We are called to respond to this worldly astuteness with Christian astuteness, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a matter of departing from the worldly spirit and values, which the [devil](#) really favours, in order to live according to the Gospel. How is worldliness manifested? Worldliness is manifested by attitudes of corruption, deception, subjugation, and it constitutes the most ill-chosen road, the road of sin, because one leads you to the other! It's like a chain, even if — it's true — it is generally the easiest road to travel. Instead, the spirit of the Gospel requires a serious lifestyle — serious but joyful, full of joy! — serious and challenging, marked by honesty, fairness, respect for others and their dignity, and a sense of duty. And this is Christian astuteness!

The [journey of life](#) necessarily involves a choice between two roads: between honesty and dishonesty, between fidelity and infidelity, between selfishness and altruism, between good and evil. You can not waver between one and the other, because they move on different and conflicting forms of logic. The prophet Elijah said to the people of Israel that went on these two roads: "You are limping with both feet!" (cf. 1 Kings 18:21). It's a fine image. It is important to decide which direction to take and then, once you have chosen the right one, to walk it with enthusiasm and determination, trusting in God's grace and the support of His Spirit. The conclusion of the Gospel passage is powerful and categorical: "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Lk 16:13).

With this teaching, Jesus today urges us to make a clear choice between Him and the worldly spirit, between the logic of corruption, of the abuse of power and greed, and that of righteousness, meekness and sharing. Some people conduct themselves with [corruption](#) as they do with drugs: they think they can use it and stop when they want. It starts out small: a tip here, a bribe over there.... And between this and that, one's freedom is slowly lost. Corruption is also habit-forming, and generates poverty, exploitation, and suffering. How many victims there are in the world today! How many victims of this widespread corruption. But when we try to follow the Gospel logic of integrity, clarity in intentions and in behaviour, of fraternity, we become artisans of justice and we open horizons of hope for humanity. In gratuitousness and by giving of ourselves to our brothers and sisters, we serve the right master: God.

May the Virgin Mary help us to choose at every opportunity and at all costs, the right way, even finding the courage to go against the tide, in order to follow Jesus and his Gospel."

Internet source: <https://www.popefrancishomilies.com/life>

✚ Please, continue to pray this special inspirational EMMANUEL moleben prayer service (sent to you in pdf by email earlier or if you would like to have a printed copy please talk to the pastor) at 9:00 pm every evening until Dec. 24th to Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ which we are praying during Advent / Saint Philip's Fast before Christmas. Your Christian prayerful Novena intentions for peace, faith and unity in our families, communities and countries in the World are very important and truly appreciated!



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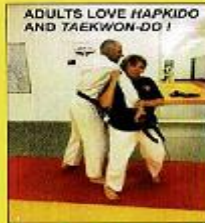
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