



St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

205 Highland Avenue
Des Peres, MO 63122

*A parish of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia*

V. Rev. Fr. Martin Swanson, Pastor
Fr. Sergii Alekseev, Associate Pastor
V. Rev. Fr. Radomir Chkautovich, Attached



January 2018

The Word Became Flesh. A Sermon in the Nativity of Christ

by St. John of Kronstadt

The Word became flesh; that is, the Son of God, co-eternal with God the Father and with the Holy Spirit, became human – having become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. O, wondrous, awesome and salvific mystery! The One Who had no beginning took on a beginning according to humanity; the One without flesh assumed flesh. God became man – without ceasing to be God. The Unapproachable One became approachable to all, in the aspect of a humble servant. Why, and for what reason, was there such condescension [shown] on the part of the Creator toward His transgressing creatures – toward humanity which, through an act of its own will had fallen away from God, its Creator?

It was by reason of a supreme, inexpressible mercy toward His creation on the part of the Master, Who could not bear to see the entire race of mankind – which, He, in creating, had endowed with wondrous gifts – enslaved by the devil and thus destined for eternal suffering and torment.

And the Word became flesh!...in order to make us earthly beings into heavenly ones, in order to make sinners into saints; in order to raise us up from corruption into incorruption, from earth to heaven; from enslavement to sin and the devil – into the glorious freedom of children of God; from death – into immortality, in order to make us sons of God and to seat us

together with Him upon the Throne as His royal children.

O, boundless compassion of God! O, inexpressible wisdom of God! O, great wonder, astounding not only the human mind, but the angelic [mind] as well!

Let us glorify God! With the coming of the Son of God in the flesh upon the earth, with His offering Himself up as a sacrifice for the sinful human race, there is given to those who believe the blessing of the Heavenly Father, replacing that curse which had been uttered by God in the beginning; they are adopted and receive the promise of an eternal inheritance of life. To a humanity orphaned by reason of sin, the Heavenly Father returns anew through the mystery of re-birth, that is, through baptism and repentance. People are freed of the tormenting, death-bearing authority of the devil, of the afflictions of sin and of various passions.

Human nature is deified for the sake of the boundless compassion of the Son of God; and its sins are purified; the defiled are sanctified. The ailing are healed. Upon those in dishonour are boundless honour and glory bestowed.

Those in darkness are enlightened by the Divine light of grace and reason.

The human mind is given the rational power of God – we have the mind of Christ (Cor. 2, 16), says the Holy apostle Paul. To the human heart, the heart of Christ is given. (cont'd page 5)

Special Services & Events for January

1/3 Wed. 3:00 p.m. Fr. Martin's Office Hours
1/3 Wed. 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice in the Parish Hall
1/5 Fri. 9:00 a.m. Royal Hours for Nativity
1/6 Sat. 5:00 p.m. Great Compline and Matins for the Eve of the Nativity of our Lord
1/7 Sun. 10:00 a.m. D. Liturgy of St. Basil the Great for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord
1/7 Sun 11:30 a.m. Nativity Banquet and Children's Chorus in the Hall
1/8 Mon. 6:00 p.m. Vigil for the Feast of St. Stephen
1/9 Tues. 8:00 a.m. D. Liturgy for the Proto-Martyr St. Stephen
1/10 Wed. 3:00 a.m. Fr. Martin's Office Hours
1/10 Wed. 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice Hall
1/13 Sat. 5:00 p.m. Hierarchical Vigil for the Feast of St. Basil the Great
1/14 Sun. 9:30 a.m. Meeting of Archbishop Peter followed by

Ordination of Sub-Deacon Ephraim to the Diaconate and Hierarchical D.
Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
1/14 Sun. Noon—Parish Feast Day Banquet in the Parish Hall
1/14 Sun. 6:00 p.m. Vigil
1/15 Mon 8:00 a.m. D. Liturgy
1/15 Mon. 6:00 p.m. Vigil
1/16 Tues. 8:00 a.m. D. Liturgy
1/16 Tues. 6:00 p.m. Vigil
1/17 Wed. 8:00 a.m. D. Liturgy
1/18 Thurs. 6:00 p.m. Great Compline and Matins followed by Great Blessing of Water for the Feast of Theophany
1/19 Fri. 8:00 a.m. D. Liturgy followed by the Great Blessing of Water for Theophany
1/24 Wed. 3:00 p.m. Fr. Martin's Office Hours
1/24 Wed. 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice in the Parish Hall
1/31 Wed. 3:00 p.m. Fr. Martin's Office Hours
1/31 Wed. 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice in the parish hall

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Parish News

Christ is Born!

After a long season of Advent preparation we will celebrate Christ's birth on January 7th. The sequence of Nativity services will begin on Friday, January 5th with Royal Hours at 9:00 a.m. On Saturday at 5:00 p.m. we'll serve Great Compline, Matins and a Litia for the Nativity of our Lord, and then on Sunday morning we'll begin Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m., immediately followed by a festive meal in the parish hall.

Sign Up to Bring A Dish for the Parish Feasts

You will find two sign-up sheets on the bulletin board in the hall. One is for the Nativity meal and the other for the Parish Feast Day banquet on January 7th and 14th respectively. The Parish will provide the main course for each of these meals. We ask parishioners to sign up to bring side dishes such as salads, casseroles, vegetables as well as desserts and beverages.

Parish Sunday School to sponsor Nativity Carols

The parish Sunday School will present a program of Christmas carols for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. All the parish children are encouraged to participate. The chorus will perform on Christmas Day, January 7th, and parents should contact Matushka Svetlana to have your children participate. Rehearsals will be held on Sundays following D. Liturgy.

Pascha in January

That's what the parish feast day is—a second Pascha. On Sunday January 14th, the feast of St. Basil the Great, our parish will celebrate its winter Pascha. And just as you'd be sure to attend services on Pascha you should plan to attend the services on the parish's paternal feast.

Archbishop Peter will serve the Hierarchal Vigil at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. The parish clergy and congregation will gather at 9:30 a.m. to greet the Archbishop with the traditional bread and salt. He will then vest in the midst of the Church and begin the Divine Liturgy. The Archbishop will ordain Subdeacon Ephraim to the diaconate after the consecration of the Holy Gifts during the Liturgy.

NOTE: Archbishop Peter asks that NO PHOTOGRAPHS are taken during the hierarchal services.

Immediately following the service, the parish will host a sumptuous festal banquet in the hall. In addition to Archbishop Peter we expect Hieromonk Seraphim along with several monks from the Holy Cross Monastery in West Virginia to be with us.

Our Lord's Baptism to be Celebrated on January 19

The Third Great Feast to take place in January is the Theophany or Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist. The Feast will be celebrated beginning on Thursday January 18 with Vigil consisting of Great Compline and Matins, followed by the Great Blessing of Water. The following morning Divine Liturgy will be served at 8:00 a.m., once again followed by the Great Blessing of Water. We ask those who wish to take Holy Water with them to bring a clean, suitable container so that this special water can be taken home. Traditionally, Orthodox Christians keep the container at their icon corner and drink a sip each day along with prosphora for the health of soul and body.

Blessing of Homes from January 19 - February 18

It is traditional during this season for Orthodox Christians to have their homes blessed by a priest with Holy Water sanctified at the Feast of Theophany. The blessing of homes begins immediately after the Divine Liturgy on Theophany and continues until the start of Great Lent. If you wish to have your home blessed please make an appointment by signing up on the bulletin board in the hall. Prepare for the blessing of your home by having a small table covered by a clean white cloth in the main room of your home. On the table you should have a small bowl for Holy Water, two small candles in stands and an icon of the Baptism of Our Lord in the Jordan. If you don't have these items the priest can provide them. Also, please have all animals contained and televisions and radios turned off. Remember this is a religious service and should be conducted with as much dignity as possible. Family members including children should participate to the degree that they are able.

Wednesdays are Yard Days

On most Wednesday's you'll find Parish Grounds Committee Chairman Malcolm Royse working on various landscaping projects. Currently we're working on clearing the area down by the creek of honeysuckle and other undergrowth. Eventually we hope to have this area cleared with walking paths and a meditation area by the outdoor cross. If you have any free time on Wednesday's and would like to help with this project please see Malcolm for details. Also, if you have some free time on a Wednesday and in the area, feel free to stop by, we can always use extra help.

Parish Directory to be Published in January

The 2018 parish directory will be coming out in January. Please make sure that you are included and that your information is correct. If you were not included in the previous directory or if the information is incorrect, please contact Fr. Martin either by e-mail or in person as soon as possible.

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More Parish News

Revised Visitors Guide To Be Published

Our parish Visitors Guide was originally published in 2000, but has been out of print since 2013. The primary purpose of the newly printed and revised Guide is to give visitors to our new church an opportunity to learn something about Orthodoxy. Most of our visitors are non-Orthodox who frequently stop by the church out of curiosity more than anything else. Many of them are simply driving by and are attracted by the unique appearance of the building. The Guide was written as an elementary introduction to the church and as a rudimentary teaching tool. Hopefully it will provide a basic explanation about what people see and an incentive for them to return. We are grateful to parishioner Ron Wall who designed, photographed, laid out, and edited the new guide. He did a wonderful job! The guide will be available by Nativity.

Parish Fundraiser Planned for 2018

To raise money for the parish, we will be having a one-day, multi-family yard sale on a Saturday in late summer or early fall 2018 (probably sometime in September or October). Please support the parish in this effort. If you have been intending to donate items around your house to a charity, hang on to them for a little longer and donate them to St. Basil's for the sale. Let your friends, family, and relatives know about the sale and offer to accept donated items from them. The church is unable to store items for the sale, so we need parishioners to hang on to them for now. During the week prior to the sale, we may need some parishioners to help pick-up and/or deliver larger items to the church. For the sale itself, we will need help with advertising/signage, accepting delivery of items at the church in the days immediately before the sale, pricing items, setting up tables, selling items, cleaning up, and delivering any leftover items to Goodwill (or a similar organization). If you have questions about donating items or if you would like to volunteer to help make the fundraiser a success, please contact parishioner Heather Bailey (Marshall) by email (heather131@centurylink.net).

Choir Practice Schedule for January:

Jan 3 - 6:30pm rehearse for Nativity
Jan 7-9:30 am choir warm-up before Sunday Liturgy
Jan 10 - 6:30pm rehearse for St. Basil Day, Hierarchical Service, & Ordination
Jan 14 -9:10am choir warm-up before Greeting of Bishop
Jan 17- NO choir practice (since many services this week)
Jan 21 - 9:30am choir warm-up before Sunday Liturgy
Jan 24 - NO choir practice - Carol is out of town
Jan 31 - 6:30pm 1st rehearsal for Great Lent and Pascha
Note: 1st Triodion Sunday is January 28th - Sunday of Publican & Pharisee

January Prayer list

Reader Gennady Barabtarlo (Health)
Boris Artemov (Health)
Archimandrite Seraphim of Holy Cross Hermitage (Health)

Contact Your Priest if You are Ill or Hospitalized

Contact Fr. Martin to have yourself or your loved ones added to the parish prayer list. Let one of the Fathers know if you, a member of your family, or a friend is ill or hospitalized so that appropriate prayers and visits can be arranged. Please note: Hospitals don't notify clergy of patients, even if you list yourself as a parish member.

USE eSCRIP

It costs \$0 and benefits the parish. Get Cards at the candle counter.

SERVERS WANTED!

Boys may begin to serve in the altar at St. Basil's from the time they begin to go to Confession (usually about 9 years old). We encourage all our boys to serve in the altar! For more information please contact Michael Orlando.

St. Basil's Parish Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/StBasiltheGreatSTLMO
For daily edification and updates of interest, like our Facebook Fanpage! Parishioner Ron Wall brings the best of Orthodoxy to us there everyday! "Like" us to appear in your FB Newsfeed



St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church St. Louis, MO

And Lead us Not into Temptation

The Pope of Rome Leads His Flock into Temptation

By Archpriest John Whiteford

The Catholic News Agency summarized the Pope's contention: "The Pope said that the words "non ci indurre in tentazione" – "Do not lead us into temptation," in the English version – are not correct, because, he said, God does not actively lead us into temptation.

The Pope also praised a new translation operated by the French Bishops' conference. The new French translation is "et ne nous laisse pas entrer in tentation" – "let us not enter into temptation." It replaces the previous translation "ne nous soumet pas à la tentation" – "do not submit us to temptation". This portion of the Lord's prayer is found in Matthew 6:13 and Luke 11:4, and the Greek text is identical in both cases.

If we put a literal English translation beneath the text of the Greek, you can see how the Greek text is structured: *καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν* and not lead us into temptation

The Young's Literal Translation translates it as: "And mayest Thou not lead us to temptation..."

So there is really no case to be made that "Lead us not into temptation" is a bad translation. What the Pope is suggesting is a very interpretative translation, but one which has little basis in the text itself. The issue is whether God might actively lead us into a time of "temptation" or "testing", or whether He might only passively allow this to happen.

We know that God does not tempt us in the sense of trying to entice us to sin (James 1:13). But might God lead us into a time of testing, which even involves temptation? We know this happened in the case of Christ Himself: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1).

Some argue, based on what they suppose the original Aramaic form of the prayer to have been, that the translation should be rendered in the more passive sense praised by Pope Francis, but John Nolland, in his commentary on Luke rejects this line of reasoning:

"There is finally no linguistic justification for avoiding attribution to God of the trial in view. A Semitic original may have been ambiguous, but it has been taken in the Greek language tradition represented by our Gospel writers in a quite unambiguous way. In the Exodus setting and beyond, God is often said to put his people to the test (Exod 16:4; 20:20; Deut

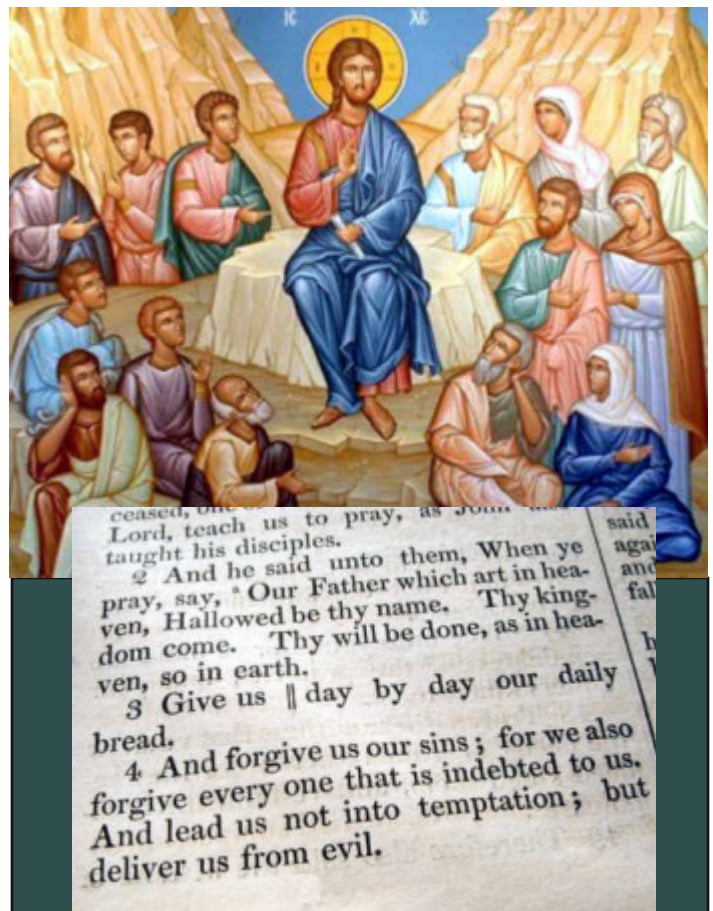
8:2, 16; 13:4; 33:8; Judg 2:22)" (Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34, vol. 35b (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), p. 618).

And if the Greek text is a translation of the Aramaic original, especially since both St. Matthew and St. Luke render it in exactly the same way, what would be the basis for not following their translation as closely as possible when translating the text into English or any other language?

Here is how the text is translated in several major English translations:

- "And lead us not into temptation..." King James Version
- "And lead us not into temptation..." Revised Standard Version
- "And do not lead us into temptation..." New American Standard Bible
- "And lead us not into temptation..." New International Version
- "And do not bring us to the time of trial..." [and then it has a footnote: "Or us into temptation"] New Revised Standard Version
- "And lead us not into temptation..." English Standard Version

So the Pope is simply wrong, yet again.



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On Christmas

(cont'd from page 1) The perishable is made immortal. Those naked and wounded by sin and by passions are adorned in Divine glory. Those who hunger and thirst are sated and assuaged by the nourishing and soul-strengthening Word of God and by the most pure Body and Divine Blood of Christ. The inconsolable are consoled. Those ravaged by the devil have been – and continue to be – delivered.

What, then, O brethren, is required of us in order that we might avail ourselves of all the grace brought unto us from on high by the coming to earth of the Son of God? What is necessary, first of all, is faith in the Son of God, in the Gospel as the salvation-bestowing heavenly teaching; a true

Christmas' Deeper Meaning

by Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol

Every time we stand before the Lord either in prayer or in celebration in Church of an event from the life of Christ, or we are in any other way experiencing the presence of the Lord, two basic things happen, which are attested by the Church and the experience of the Saints: Firstly, we are feeling joy because we are experiencing the Lord's abundant love towards man. He moves our heart into great gratitude, since we are experiencing- to the measure of our spiritual condition- God's great gift for us.

Secondly, by being presented before the Lord we are also standing in a kind of critical judgment for our actions, which leads to our salvation, particularly if this takes place during the great feast days which commemorate events from the life of Christ. Indeed any event in His life prompts us into adopting a critical attitude towards ourselves which does not lead to damnation but to our deliverance.

Thus, we are commemorating our Lord's incarnation in order to experience on the one hand His great love for us and on the other to feel great gratitude for all the wonderful things He has granted us. In addition, this benefits us in a practical way, because we are offered the opportunity to pass judgement on our life. As St Paul says: 'The Lord will not judge us if we pass judgement on ourselves'. If we criticise our ways in this life, we will not be judged in the afterlife, because judgement has already been accomplished in this world.

In other words, now that our Lord's feast is before us, we have the opportunity to critically compare our lives in terms of all the things that our Lord has accomplished for our deliverance, particularly since we know that He did not leave anything to chance but guided all things as the Master of history that He is. He is the One Who wished all events to take place in the way

repentance of sins and the correction of life and of heart; communion in prayer and in the mysteries [sacraments]; the knowledge and fulfillment of Christ's commandments. Also necessary are the virtues: Christian humility, alms-giving, continence, purity and chastity, simplicity and goodness of heart.

Let us, then, O brothers and sisters, bring these virtues as a gift to the One Who was born for the sake of our salvation – let us bring them in place of the gold, frankincense and myrrh which the Magi brought Him, as to One Who is King, God, and Man, come to die for us. This, from us, shall be the most-pleasing form of sacrifice to God and to the Infant Jesus Christ. Amen.

they did, even to the smallest detail. He was the One Who wished to be born in the specific year, at the specific place, as well as all the other elements which constitute the great event of His incarnation.

All the Saints used to critically compare the particular events happening in their lives with the life of Christ and passed judgement on themselves. We would like to believe that a Christian is the one who imitates the life of Christ as far as humanly possible. He then replenishes any deficiencies through repentance and humility. And this constitutes his inner spiritual work.

On such feast days, our Church constantly glorifies the Lord for His great condescension towards man through wonderful hymns, while digging into the deeper theological meaning of His incarnation. Holy elders as well as pious laity have particular experience of the deeper meaning of this event. When elder Efraim Katounakiotis returned from a trip to Jerusalem, we had expected him to be overwhelmed by the experience of Golgotha and of the Crucifixion. Yet, he was overwhelmed by the Cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem. He stood before this event saying: 'I thought I was somebody when I was living in my ascetic hut at Katounakia, amongst my meagre possessions. But when I saw where Christ was born, I became truly crushed in spirit'.

Having been born in a cave, persecuted and despised by all men, Christ accomplished the greatest event in man's history: His incarnation. God became man in total quietude, humility and obscurity. No one knew what was happening that night, except for some shepherds and the wise men from Persia. This event took place in absolute poverty and humility. Therefore, every time we are bothered by various demands and desires, we should place ourselves in front of the Cave of the Nativity, stand before Word's incarnation, and see how our actions compare with what the Lord' did that night. In this way we are

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On Christmas (cont'd)

passing judgement on our actions. In the same manner we ought to critically examine our entire life.

Ever since God became Man and the angels sang 'peace on earth', the Word of God is saying to us: 'I did not come to bring peace, but to bring a sword'. Why did the Lord bring a sword while the angels were singing about peace? Christ was the Peace which came to the world and became man so that we would be able to love Him. He showed us that our relationship with the Lord is not a relationship with an ideology, because nobody can love an idea. One may be devoted to some philosophical ideology, but no one can love it, because it will not reciprocate one's love.

In the life of the Church quite the opposite is happening. We have nothing to do with a philosophical ideology and the Word of God did not become any such idea. Word became flesh. The Word of God incarnated so that we could love Him. And as soon as we begin to love Him, we will be able to understand that He was the One Who loved us first in a manner which cannot be comprehended. The Apostle says that 'we love Him, since He first loved us'. This is the kind of mystery which takes place in the Church. It is for this reason that Christ, as the peace of the world, became the subject of love and not of faith. One ought to transcend faith and hope in order to remain in love. As the Apostle says, 'eventually hope and faith will be abandoned and only love will remain', since love is an experiential fact, an existential event which makes man realize that he is truly united with God. This is the path walked by all those who loved Him unto the end.

Stephen, the first martyr, sealed his love for the Lord by imitating Him. It is written in the Acts, that when he was arrested because he was preaching about Christ, his face lit up like the face of an angel while standing trial. They condemned him to death by stoning as if he was a great sinner because this was what the Law of Moses stipulated. Yet, filled by the Holy Spirit, Stephen was praying not for himself but for the whole world, despite his awful predicament. Thus he imitated Christ, Who had been praying for those who crucified Him while dying on the Cross.

Therefore, ever since Christ came into the world and brought peace, millions of martyrs gave up their lives because of their faith in Him and because they truly loved Him and had tasted His love. The love of Christ spoke into their hearts.

When we are celebrating the feast days for the Saints and the martyrs, we are not just commemorating certain events of their lives. We are commemorating the days when they passed judgement on themselves. They had critically looked at

themselves in line with the life of the Lord. They did not take such days lightly. The saints delved deeply into the true meaning of their lives, critically examining and passing judgement on their own actions. On the one hand, they thought about Christ in His manger, His humility and obscurity, His silence and poverty, His rejection and wretchedness and on the other, they compared their own actions and examined them critically.

The Lord revealed, through the lives of the Apostles and of all the Saints, that it is not possible for the Holy Spirit to reside in us without us bearing Its fruit. He expressly stressed that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control'. Therefore, we ought to look for such fruit inside ourselves, which indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. Then we may assess where we stand spiritually. Such critical assessment is necessary and lifesaving. If we embark on this exercise during this festive season, then it will be truly lifesaving for us because it will give rise to the spiritual struggle of repentance and humility and will change our ways.

At the same time it will lead us to seek the Lord's mercy in a loving way. As soon as we recognize that we are indeed people who live in the dark, we too will declare: 'where would your light shine, Lord, if not on those who live in the dark?' As soon as we recognize that we live in the dark, we will immediately seek the light. Yet, if we think that we are living in the light, then we will never see the true light, since we only possess the light which we can see.

