

Sunday Bulletin  
January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Before Nativity, of the Holy Fathers  
The Genealogy of Jesus Christ



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church  
1025 N Belle Vista Ave, Youngstown, Ohio 44509



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian  
Orthodox Church

Українська Православна  
Церква Св Петра і Павла

1025 N. Belle Vista Ave  
Youngstown, OH 44509

Phone: 330-799-3830

Email: [stspeterpauluoc@gmail.com](mailto:stspeterpauluoc@gmail.com)

Fr. Mykola Zomchak  
*Pastor*

Anna Anderson  
*Choir Director*

Chuck Woloschak  
*President of the Parish*

**Ministries:**

Altar Servers  
Church Choir  
Church School  
Adult Education

St. Mary's Sisterhood

Sts. Peter & Paul Brotherhood

Senior UOL Chapter

Junior UOL Chapter

Youth Ministry

Orphanage Mission Ministry

Bingo Team

Fr Mykola Zomchak - Editor

**Website:**

<https://www.stspeterpauluoc.org>

## STS Peter & Paul UOC

*Let us celebrate the Resurrection of Christ*



### Sunday Bulletin

January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Before Nativity, of the Holy Fathers

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

- **Changeable Parts of the Liturgy** - bull 3
- **January Birthdays & Annivers.** - bull 5
- **Liturgical Schedule & Events** - bull 6
- **Announcements & Greetings** - bull 6
- **The Sunday Before the Nativity** - bull 7
- **Christmas Letter from Fr Mykola** - bull 8
- **Superstitions** - bull 9
- **Happy New Year** - bull 10
- **Orthodox Christianity 101:**
  - Jesus, the Perfect Image of Human Life** - bull 11
  - Jesus, the Reconciler of Man with God** - bull 12
  - Jesus, the Destroyer of Death** - bull 15



## CHANGEABLE PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

### Troparion (Resurrection) - Tone 5

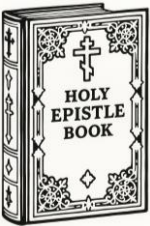
Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead//  
by His glorious Resurrection.

### Tone 5 Kontakion (Resurrection)

You descended into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death.  
You have delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of man,//  
and we cry to You: "O Lord, save us!"

### Tone 5 Prokeimenon – (Resurrection)

You, O Lord, shall protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever.  
*V. Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly!*

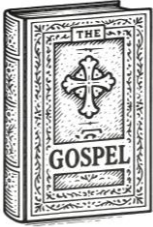


### The Reading is from the Letter of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrew (11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40)

**BREThEREN** , by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

### Alleluia and Verses Tone 5

V. Go forth, prosper and reign, for the sake of meekness, righteousness and truth!  
V. For You love righteousness and hate iniquity.



## The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

### Communion Hymn

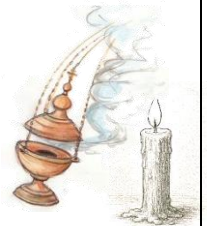
Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (*Ps. 148:1*)

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*

### MEMORY ETERNAL

#### PLEASE PRAY FOR RESTING OF THE SOULS

Mary Bobersky, Walter Duzzny, Dennis Currie, Julian, Vasyly Zomchak, Heather Rhodes, Joe Zemko, Jeff Ulrich, Judy Cebriak, William Zylka, Serhiy, Pat Mamajack, Arlene Hawryluk, Mary C. Moon, Lidiia Zabrodina, Metro Senedak, Eleanor K. Laise, Julian Naumenko, Patricia Huly, John Senediak, Ann & George Klein. Victims of the war in Ukraine.



### PRAYER LIST

#### PLEASE PRAY FOR HEALING, COMFORT, AND SPIRITUAL PEACE

Metropolitan Anthony, Archbishop Daniel, Patricia Mogish, Denny Lightner, Kevin Finnerty, Alice Dobransky, Jamie Maluk, Alexandr, Missouri, Jane, Sam, Lorenzo, Lori, Christine Kline, Larry, Soldier Ivan, Dolly Mehalco, Stephen Shonn, Thelma Zemko, Artur Bohuslav, Lori Hayda, Shirley Duffy, Michele (Senediak) Caulder, Dobrodiyka Lilya, Sandy, Marilyn O'Leary, Harold Owens, Marianne Carmack, Nicholas Yurchyk, Pauline Witkowsky, Eileen Maluk, Peter Anderson, Albert Auden, Boris & Kathleen Vuksanovich, Kathy Zebel. People Suffering from any Illnesses. Ukrainian people suffering from war.



OUR OFFERINGS TO THE LORD	On December 21	On December 28
General:	\$ 2646.00	\$ 1120.00
Renovation:	\$ 00.00	\$ 00.00
Online Donations on Tithe.ly	\$ 00.00	\$ 25.00

## Bulletin Dedication

*(in memory of a loved one, or in honor for an anniversary)*

<u>Sun Jan 4</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Jan 11</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Available	<u>Sun Jan 18</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Available	<u>Sun Jan 25</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	
<u>Sun Feb 1</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Feb 8</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Feb 15</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Feb 22</u> Not Available	

## THIS MONTH OUR PARISH CELEBRATES

### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Diane Malys	18 Erika Mark
1 Karen Ray	19 Tod Betts
1 Linda German	20 Robert Kline
2 Beverly Henry	20 Erica Shonn
2 Ruth Grave	20 Janna Williams
4 Brian Slagel	24 Jeffrey Senediak
7 JESUS CHRIST	25 Greg Pupa
10 Teagan Woloschak	26 Alice Dobransky
11 Brookly Ava Antonia Yuschak	26 Adeline Sanetrick
11 Tom Drabick	26 Olena Serrano
12 Stephen Inchak	27 David Anderson
17 Olivia Lanise Zets	27 Nicholas Anderson
	30 Metropolitan Anthony
	31 Jackleen Buzzelli

### JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

January 27, 2001 – Michael & Melissa Crown

# Liturgical Schedule & Feast Days



## SERVICE AND FEAST DAY SCHEDULE

\* (HEARING CONFESSIONS ON SUNDAYS BEFORE LITURGY 8:30AM - 9:15AM)

- Sunday, January 4, 9:30AM – **Divine Liturgy, 30<sup>th</sup>** Sunday after Pentecost  
*The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah*
- Tuesday, January 6, 6:30PM – Christmas Eve, Great Compline before Nativity,  
Caroling in Church.
- Wednesday, January 7, 9:30AM – Divine Liturgy,  
**THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST - CHRISTMAS.**
- Sunday, January 11, 9:30AM – Divine Liturgy, 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

## Upcoming dates & events

- January 13 – **Tea & Fellowship with Fr Mykola** at 6pm at Church downstairs
- January 18 – **Fellowship** organized by Erica Shonn in Memory of her father Stephen Shonn

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & GREETINGS:

- **Tea & Fellowship with Fr Mykola – Tue, Jan 13**  
Tea & Fellowship with Fr Mykola at 6pm at Church downstairs



- **2026 Church Calendar is available**

Please get a calendar for your home.

You may take more than one: for your workplace or for someone else etc.

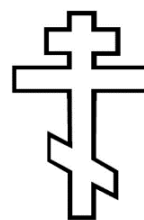
- **REPOSED IN THE LORD:**

### + **Mary Bobersky**

O God of spirits, and of all flesh, Who has trampled down death; You have overthrown the devil and have given life to Your world: now, give rest, Lord, to the soul of Your departed servant Mary in a place of light, a place of refreshment, a place of repose where there is no sickness, sighing, nor sorrow. As You are a good God Who loves mankind, pardon every sin which she has committed, whether by word, deed or thought, for there is no man who lives and has not sinned. You alone are sinless, Your righteousness is eternal and Your word is truth.

For You are the Resurrection, the life, and the repose of Your departed servant Mary, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father Who is Eternal and Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

- \* **Funeral Services were held privately.**



## The Sunday Before the Nativity

The Sunday Before the Nativity invites us to pause and look backward before we move forward. Before we stand at the manger in Bethlehem, the Church calls us to remember the long journey that led there—the generations of faithful men and women who waited, hoped, struggled, and trusted in God’s promise.

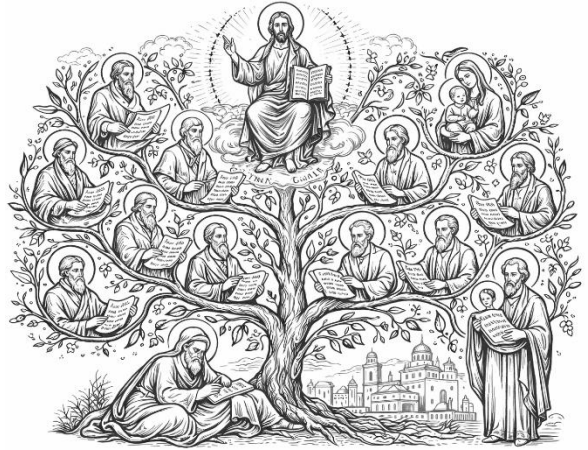
The genealogy of Jesus Christ reminds us that God enters history not in abstraction, but through real people and real lives. Among the Holy Fathers are kings and shepherds, the righteous and the broken, those who were faithful and those who failed. Yet God worked through all of them. This teaches us that salvation is not built on human perfection, but on God’s faithfulness.

This Sunday also reminds us that Christ comes from within our human story. He does not arrive suddenly or disconnected from us. He takes on flesh from a lineage marked by suffering, exile, repentance, and hope. In doing so, He sanctifies time itself, showing us that no life, no generation, and no struggle is wasted when it is offered to God.

The Holy Fathers teach us that God’s promises unfold slowly, often across centuries. Their lives remind us that faith is not always rewarded immediately. Many lived and died holding onto God’s word without seeing its fulfillment. Yet their patience was not in vain. Their trust prepared the way for Christ, showing us that obedience and faithfulness always bear fruit, even when we cannot see it.

This Sunday also calls us to reflect on our own spiritual ancestry. We are shaped not only by our families, but by the faith handed down to us through the Church. Every prayer whispered, every act of repentance, every moment of endurance becomes part of the living tradition that prepares the world for Christ. In this way, our lives—ordinary as they may seem—are woven into God’s saving work.

As the feast of the Nativity draws near, the Church gently reminds us that Christ comes quietly, humbly, and faithfully—just as He always has. He comes not only to a manger long ago, but into the hearts that are waiting, trusting, and open to receive Him. And like the Holy Fathers before us, we are invited to make room for Him through faith, patience, and hope.



# CHRISTMAS LETTER

**Dear Beloved Parishioners and Friends of  
Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church,**

As the holy and radiant Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ draws near, our hearts are gently called to Bethlehem—to the quiet night when heaven touched earth, and God revealed His love in the most humble and tender way. The eternal Word of God chose not a palace, but a manger; not power, but poverty; not comfort, but closeness to His people.

In the birth of Christ, we are reminded that no place is too small, no heart too broken, and no life too ordinary for God to enter. The light of Christ shines not only in moments of joy, but especially in times of struggle, uncertainty, and weariness. Wherever there is darkness, fear, or loneliness, Christ comes to bring peace, healing, and hope.

This year has not been easy for many. We carry personal burdens, concerns for our families, and sorrow over the suffering we see in the world—especially in our beloved homeland and beyond. Yet Christmas assures us that God has not abandoned His people. He is Emmanuel—*God with us*. The Child born in Bethlehem walks with us still, strengthening us, comforting us, and calling us to trust in His unfailing love.

At Sts. Peter & Paul Parish, the Feast of the Nativity reminds us who we are: a family united in faith. When we gather to pray, sing, and glorify God together, we become living witnesses to the miracle of Christmas. In every candle lit, every carol sung, and every prayer offered, Christ is born anew in our midst.

I encourage you this season to open your hearts to Christ once again. Let His peace enter your homes. Let His mercy heal old wounds. Let His love move us to kindness, forgiveness, and compassion toward one another. So we may become bearers of the light that the world so desperately needs.

You and your loved ones are warmly invited to join us in celebrating the Nativity of Our Lord:

- **Tuesday, January 6:** Christmas Eve Service at **6:30 PM**
- **Wednesday, January 7:** Christmas Day Divine Liturgy at **9:30 AM**



If you know someone who is alone, struggling, or in need of encouragement, please invite them—or bring them—with you. As the greatest Christmas gift we can offer is simply presence, prayer, and love.

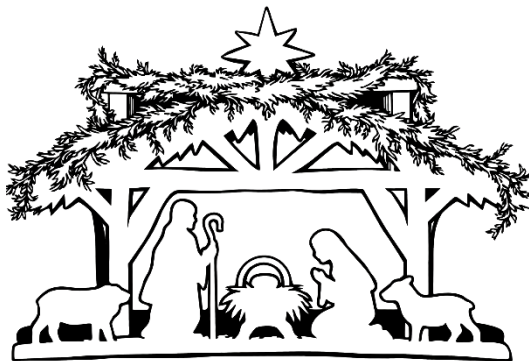
On behalf of our parish family, I extend to you my heartfelt prayers and blessings. May the newborn Christ fill your hearts with joy, your homes with peace, and your lives with hope—today and always.

**Christ Is Born! Glorify Him!**

With love and prayers in Christ,  
Rev. Mykola Zomchak, *pastor*

+ Fr. Mykola

Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church  
1025 N Belle Vista Ave, Youngstown, OH



Nativity Scene by the Belfry  
- Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church

# Superstitions

Superstitions often come from a place of fear and uncertainty. When life feels fragile, people naturally look for signs, rituals, or patterns that promise protection or good outcomes. We may hear sayings such as “don’t do this or something bad will happen,” or feel uneasy if something happens “the wrong way.” These beliefs are usually passed down through families or cultures and are rarely questioned, yet they quietly shape how people think and act.

For example, some fear certain dates or numbers, believing they carry bad luck. Others avoid specific actions—opening an umbrella indoors, spilling salt, breaking a mirror—out of concern that misfortune will follow. From a spiritual perspective, these beliefs suggest that our lives are governed by chance or hidden forces. Faith in Christ contradicts this completely. Scripture teaches us that our days are not ruled by luck, but are known and held by God. Nothing has power over us except what God allows for our salvation.

Another common superstition is the belief that saying something good out loud will “jinx” it. Spiritually, this reveals fear that joy must be hidden to survive. Yet Christ invites us to give thanks openly and to trust God with both joy and sorrow. Gratitude is not dangerous; it is an act of faith. When we thank God, we acknowledge Him as the source of all good, not as a force that might take blessings away if we speak too freely.

Some people rely on objects—charms, symbols, or rituals performed without prayer—believing they offer protection. The spiritual life teaches us that protection does not come from objects themselves, but from a living relationship with God. Even sacred objects in the Church have meaning only when they point us toward Christ and are received with faith. Without trust in God, any object becomes no different than a superstition.

At the heart of superstition is the desire to control the uncontrollable. Faith asks us to do the opposite: to surrender control. Christ does not promise a life without difficulty, but He promises His presence in every circumstance. When we place our trust in Him, fear begins to loosen its grip. We no longer ask, “What sign should I watch for?” but instead pray, “Lord, guide me according to Your will.”

Letting go of superstition is not about judging others or dismissing traditions harshly. It is about growing in freedom. As faith deepens, fear fades. We come to understand that our lives are not shaped by omens or rituals, but by God’s love, mercy, and providence. In that truth, the heart finds peace.



## HAPPY NEW YEAR

A new year begins quietly—not with great demands or expectations, but with another day given to us by God. Time continues to move forward, and we move with it, carrying our memories, our joys, our losses, and our hopes.



The past year has shaped us.

It has asked much of us in different ways. Some days were filled with gratitude, others with struggle or loneliness. Yet through every moment, Christ has remained near—not loudly, but faithfully—walking with us, sitting beside us, holding us when words were no longer enough.

As the new year begins, many people speak about resolutions—things they hope to change or improve. Perhaps the most meaningful resolution we can make is not about doing more, but about drawing closer to God. We do this in simple ways: by beginning each day with a short prayer, by speaking honestly to Christ about our joys and struggles, by listening rather than rushing, and by trusting Him with what we can no longer control. Getting closer to God does not require great strength or perfect words; it requires only an open heart. Even a quiet “Lord, have mercy” offered each day becomes a step closer to Him.

The new year does not call us to become someone else. It invites us simply to remain—rooted in Christ. Jesus reminds us that even a small seed of faith is enough, and that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. When our bodies feel tired and our days feel slower, His love does not diminish; it draws closer.

Each morning we awaken is a quiet miracle. It is a sign that God still has a purpose for us, even when that purpose is hidden in prayer, in patience, or in allowing ourselves to be loved and cared for by others. Our lives continue to bear witness—not through what we do, but through who we are in Christ.

As this year unfolds, may we entrust it to Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. May we rest in His promises, find peace in His presence, and remember that nothing—neither age, illness, nor uncertainty—can separate us from His love. In Christ, every moment remains sacred, and every life remains precious.

***Happy New Year!***

- Fr Mykola

# Orthodox Christianity 101

## Jesus, the Perfect Image of Human Life

Christ is the incarnate Word of God. He is the Teacher and Master sent by God to the world. He is the embodiment of God Himself in human form. He is “the image of the invisible God” ([Col 1.15](#)). In Him “the fullness of divinity dwells bodily” ([Col 2.9](#)). The person who sees Jesus sees God the Father ([Jn 14.9](#)). He is the “reflection of the glory of God and the express image of His person” (Heb 1.3). He is the “light of the world” who “enlightens every man .??. coming into the world” ([Jn 8.12, 1.9](#)). To be saved by Jesus Christ is first of all to be enlightened by Him; to see Him as the Light, and to see all things in the light of Him. It is to know Him as “the Truth” ([Jn 14.6](#)); and to know the truth in Him.

*And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free (Jn:8.31).*

When one is saved by God in Christ one comes to the knowledge of the truth, fulfilling God’s desire for His creatures, for “God our Saviour .??. desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” ([1Tim 2.4](#)). In saving God’s world, Jesus Christ enlightens God’s creatures by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father and is sent into the world through Christ.

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you ([Jn 14.15–17](#)).

*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you .??. ([Jn 15.26](#)).*

*When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth .??. ([Jn 16.13](#)).*

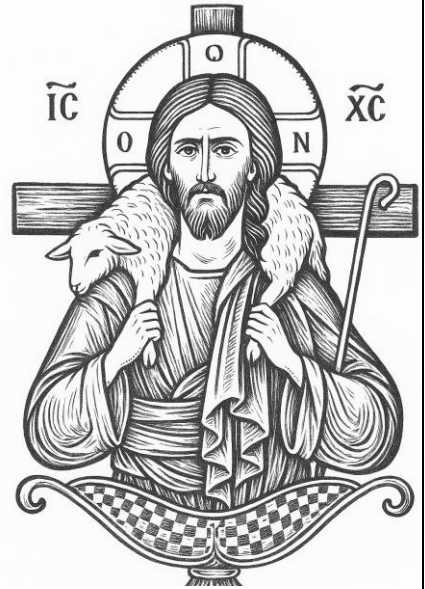
The first aspect of salvation in Christ, therefore, is to be enlightened by Him and to know the truth about God and man by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, which God gives through Him to those who believe. This is witnessed to in the apostolic writings of Saints John and Paul:

*Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. .??. For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ ([1Cor 2.13–16](#)).*

*For [God] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth. .??. To me .??. this grace was given .??. to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God .??. that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known .??. ([Eph 1.8–10; 3.9](#)).*

*For I want .??. that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ([Col 2.1–3](#)).*

*But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you know all things I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth. .??. but the anointing which you*



received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in Him. .??. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given to us ([1Jn 2.20–27; 3.24](#)).

The first aspect of man's salvation by God in Christ is, therefore, the ability and power to see, to know, to believe and to love the truth of God in Christ, who is the Truth, by the Spirit of Truth. It is the gift of knowledge and wisdom, of illumination and enlightenment, it is the condition of being "taught by God" as foretold by the prophets and fulfilled by Christ ([Is 54.13; Jer 31.33–34; Jn 6.45](#)). Thus, in the Orthodox Church, the entrance into the saving life of the Church through baptism and chrismation is called "holy illumination."

For it is God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ ([2Cor 4.6](#)).

## **Jesus, the Reconciler of Man with God**

The second aspect of Christ's one, indivisible act of salvation of man and his world is the accomplishment of man's reconciliation with God the Father through the forgiveness of sins. This is the redemption and atonement strictly speaking, the release from sins, and the punishment due to sins; the being made "at one" with God.

*While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man-though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since therefore we are now made righteous by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation ([Rom 5.6–11](#)).*

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation ([2Cor 5.17–19](#)).*

The forgiveness of sins is one of the signs of the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, as foretold in the Old Testament:

*..they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more ([Jer 31.34](#)).*

Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the Lamb that is slain that through Him all sins might be forgiven. He is also the great high priest, who offers the perfect sacrifice by which man is purged from his sins and cleansed from his iniquities. Jesus offers, as high priest, the perfect sacrifice of His own very life, His own body, as the Lamb of God, upon the tree of the cross.

*For to this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on His lips. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Pastor and Bishop of your souls ([1Pet 2.22–25](#)).*

The high-priestly offering and sacrifice of the Son of God to His eternal Father is described in great detail in the Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament scriptures.

*In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard for His godly fear. Although He was a Son, He learned*

*obedience through what He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated a high priest by God, according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5.7–10).*

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come ... He entered once for all into the Holy Place [not made by hands, i.e., the Presence of God] taking ... His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant (Heb 9.11–15).

According to the scriptures, man's sins and the sins of the whole world are forgiven and pardoned by the sacrifice of Christ, by the offering of His life—His body and His blood, which is the "blood of God" (Acts 20.28)—upon the cross. This is the "redemption," the "ransom," the "expiation," the "propitiation" spoken about in the scriptures which had to be made so that man could be "at one" with God. Christ "paid the price" which was necessary to be paid for the world to be pardoned and cleansed of all iniquities and sins ([1Cor 6.20; 7.23](#)).

In the history of Christian doctrine there has been great debate over the question of to whom Christ "pays the price" for the ransom of the world and the salvation of mankind. Some have said that the "payment" was made to the devil. This is the view that the devil received certain "rights" over man and his world because of man's sin. In his rebellion against God, man "sold himself to the devil" thus allowing the Evil One to become the "prince of this world" ([Jn 12.31](#)). Christ comes to pay the debt to the devil and to release man from his control by sacrificing Himself upon the cross.

Others say that Christ's "payment" on behalf of man had to be made to God the Father. This is the view which interprets Christ's sacrificial death on the cross as the proper punishment that had to be paid to satisfy God's wrath over the human race. God was insulted by man's sin. His law was broken and His righteousness was offended. Man had to pay the penalty for his sin by offering the proper punishment. But no amount of human punishment could satisfy God's justice because God's justice is divine. Thus the Son of God had to be born into the world and receive the punishment that was rightly to be placed on men. He had to die in order for God to receive proper satisfaction for man's offenses against Him. Christ substituted Himself on our behalf and died for our sins, offering His blood as the satisfying sacrifice for the sins of the world. By dying on the cross in place of sinful man, Christ pays the full and total payment for man's sins. God's wrath is removed. Man's insult is punished. The world is reconciled with its Creator.

Commenting on this question about to whom Christ "pays the price" for man's salvation, St Gregory the Theologian in the fourth century wrote the following in his second Easter Oration:

*Now we are to examine another fact and dogma, neglected by most people, but in my judgment well worth enquiring into. To whom was that Blood offered that was shed for us, and why was It shed? I mean the precious and famous Blood of our God and High Priest and Sacrifice.*

We were detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. Now, since a ransom belongs only to him who holds in bondage, I ask to whom was this offered, and for what cause?

If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives ransom, not only from God, but a ransom which consists of God Himself, and has such an illustrious payment for his tyranny, then it would have been right for him to have left us alone altogether!

But if to God the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed. And next, on what principle did the Blood of His only-begotten Son delight the Father, who would not receive even Isaac,

when he was being sacrificed by his father, [Abraham], but changed the sacrifice by putting a ram in the place of the human victim? (see [Gen 22](#)).

*Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the incarnation, and because Humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant [i.e., the devil] and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son who also arranged this to the honor of the Father, whom it is manifest He obeys in all things.*

In Orthodox theology generally it can be said that the language of “payment” and “ransom” is rather understood as a metaphorical and symbolical way of saying that Christ has done all things necessary to save and redeem mankind enslaved to the devil, sin and death, and under the wrath of God. He “paid the price,” not in some legalistic or juridical or economic meaning. He “paid the price” not to the devil whose rights over man were won by deceit and tyranny. He “paid the price” not to God the Father in the sense that God delights in His sufferings and received “satisfaction” from His creatures in Him. He “paid the price” rather, we might say, to Reality Itself. He “paid the price” to create the conditions in and through which man might receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life by dying and rising again in Him to newness of life (see [Rom 5–8](#); [Gal 2–4](#)).

By dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus Christ cleansed the world from evil and sin. He defeated the devil “in his own territory” and on “his own terms.” The “wages of sin is death” ([Rom 6.23](#)). So the Son of God became man and took upon Himself the sins of the world and died a voluntary death. By His sinless and innocent death accomplished entirely by His free will – and not by physical, moral, or juridical necessity – He made death to die and to become itself the source and the way into life eternal. This is what the Church sings on the feast of the Resurrection, the New Passover in Christ, the new Paschal Lamb, who is risen from the dead:

*Christ is risen from the dead!*

*Trampling down death by death!*

*And upon those in the tombs bestowing life!*

*(Easter Troparion)*

*And this is how the Church prays at the divine liturgy of Saint Basil the Great:*

*He was God before the ages, yet He appeared on earth and lived among men, becoming incarnate of a holy Virgin;*

*He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being likened to the body of our lowliness, that He might liken us to the image of His Glory.*

*For as by man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so it pleased Thine Only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of Thee, the God and Father, who was born of a woman, the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, who was born under the law to condemn sin in His flesh, so that those who were dead in Adam might be made alive in Thy Christ Himself.*

*He lived in this world and gave commandments of salvation; releasing us from the delusions of idolatry, He brought us to knowledge of Thee, the true God and Father. He obtained us for His own chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.*

*Having cleansed us in water, and sanctified us with the Holy Spirit, He gave Himself as a ransom to death, in which we were held captive, sold under sin.*

*Descending through the cross into Sheol – that He might fill all things with Himself – He loosed the pangs of death. He arose on the third day, having made for all flesh a path to the resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible for the Author of Life to be a victim of corruption. So He became the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first-born of the dead, that He might be Himself truly the first in all things .??.*

*(Eucharistic Prayer of the Liturgy of St Basil)*

## Jesus, the Destroyer of Death

The third and final aspect of the saving and redeeming action of Christ, therefore, is the deepest and most comprehensive. It is the destruction of death by Christ's own death. It is the transformation of death itself into an act of life. It is the recreation of Sheol-the spiritual condition of being dead-into the paradise of God. Thus, in and through the death of Jesus Christ, death is made to die. In Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, man cannot die, but lives forever with God.

*Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life ([Jn 5.24](#))*

*I am the Resurrection and the Life! He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die ([Jn 11.25–26](#)).*

*It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us! Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? .??. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, not powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord ([Rom 8.34–39](#)).*

*For in Him the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in Him .??. and you were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead. And you were dead in trespasses .??. God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the [demonic] principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them .??. for you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (Colossians 2.9 ff.)*

This is the doctrine of the New Testament scriptures, repeated over and again in many ways in the tradition of the Church: in its sacraments, hymnology, theology, iconography. Christ's victory over death is man's release from sins and man's victory over enslavement to the devil because in and through Christ's death man dies and is born again to eternal life. In his death sins are no longer counted. In his death the devil no longer holds him. In his death he is born again to newness of life and is liberated from all that is evil, false, demonic and sinful. In a word, he is freed from all that is dead by dying and rising again in and with Jesus.

*But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one. .??. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage (Heb 2.9–15).*

*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ([1Cor 15.20](#) ff; 56–57).*