

Sunday Bulletin  
December 14<sup>th</sup> 2025 – 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
The Rich and the Kingdom of God  
St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, the Archbishop of Myra in Lycia



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church  
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**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

December 14<sup>th</sup> 2025 – 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

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## CHANGEABLE PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

### Tone 2 Troparion (Resurrection)

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal, You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead. And when from the depths You raised the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out:// “O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!”

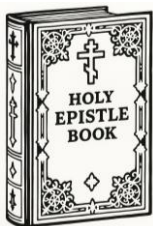
### Tone 2 Kontakion (Resurrection)

Hell became afraid, O almighty Savior, seeing the miracle of Your Resurrection from the tomb! The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with You, // and the world, my Savior, praises You forever.

### Tone 2 Prokeimenon – (Resurrection)

The Lord is my strength and my song; / He has become my salvation. (Ps. 117:14)  
V. *The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over to death.*

### The Reading is from the Letter of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Ephesians 6:10-17

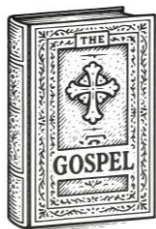


Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

### Alleluia and Verses Tone 2

*May the Lord hear you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you!*  
V. *Save the King, O Lord, and hear us on the day we call! (Ps. 19:9)*

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*



### The reading is from the Gospel according to St. Luke 18:18-27

A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’ “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he

became very sad, because he was very wealthy. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

### 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

Julian, Vasyi 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, Dennis Currie, Kevin Finnerty, Alice Dobransky, Ihor Pavlusk, Jamie Maluk, Judith Tipple, Alexandr, Missouri, Jane, Erica Shonn, Sam, Lorenzo, Rick Wilson, Tom Drabick, Walter Duzzny, 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 November 30	On December 7
General:	\$ 960.00	\$ 888.00
Renovation:	\$ 00.00	\$ 78.00
Online Donations on Tithe.ly	\$ 00.00	\$ 25.00

### Bulletin Dedication

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

<b>Sun Dec 7</b> 1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	<b>Sun Dec 14</b> 1. Available 2. Available	<b>Sun Dec 21</b> 1. Dedicated 2. Available	<b>Sun Dec 28</b> Not Available	
<b>Sun Jan 4</b> 1. Available 2. Available	<b>Sun Jan 11</b> 1. Available 2. Available	<b>Sun Jan 18</b> 1. Dedicated 2. Available	<b>Sun Jan 25</b> Not Available	

# Liturgical Schedule & Feast Days



## SERVICE AND FEAST DAY SCHEDULE

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

- Sunday, December 14, 9:30AM – **Divine Liturgy, 27<sup>th</sup>** Sunday after Pentecost (Lk 18:18-27)  
*St. Nicholas the Wonderworker  
The Rich and the Kingdom of God*
- Sunday, December 21, 9:30AM – **Divine Liturgy, 28<sup>th</sup>** Sunday after Pentecost (Lk 17:12-19)  
*Jesus healing ten lepers  
Rite of Induction to the Office of the Newly Elected Board Members & the Sisterhood Officers*
- Sunday, December 28, 9:30AM – **Divine Liturgy, 29<sup>th</sup>** Sunday after Pentecost (Lk 14:16-24)  
*Parable of the Great Banquet*
- Sunday, January 4, 9:30AM – **Divine Liturgy, 30<sup>th</sup>** Sunday after Pentecost (Mt 1:1-25)  
*The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah*

## Upcoming dates & events

- December 14 – **St Nicholas Play** in the Church. Fellowship after the Play at the Hall.
- December 21 – Baptism & Christmation of Jacob Kornblum
- December 21 – Due date to submit the names for the *Precious Angels*
- 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

## Church School Calendar

- Dec 14 - **St Nicholas Play** in Church (after Liturgy), Fellowship at the Hall

THIS MONTH OUR PARISH CELEBRATES

**HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY!**

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

3 Kevin Semchee	14 Martha Woloschak
4 Gheorghiy Kolosovsky	16 Dorothy Villers
6 Mary Zebel	20 Nicholas Yurchyk
6 Sandy Senedak	20 Jacob Kornblum
8 Bernard Gnat	23 Barbara Novicky
8 Emily Hillard	23 Frank Senediak
10 JoAnn Gnat	24 Jerry Zets
10 Thomas Inchak	25 Charles Ames
10 Ashley Woloschak	26 Diane Demetrios
13 Mike Joe Maluk	31 Melissa Crown

May the Lord Bless you with Great Health and  
Joy in Your Heart!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & GREETINGS:



- **PRECIOUS ANGELS**

Let's fill the *Christmas Trees* with  
*Precious Angels*

*A great way to Remember and Honor your loved ones.*

There are envelopes in the back of the church for sponsoring the Angels. Please fill out the information on the envelope with your donation.

**Sponsored by the Jr.UOL**

*Return the envelopes to Crystal or Yvonne By Sunday DEC 21<sup>ST</sup> !*

- **CHURCH GREETERS**

**Please consider being a church greeter.**

We need greeters for Dec 21 & 28. Jan 4, 7, 18 & 25.

We are trying to get ahead. Please sign in the back of the Church.

Or call or text - 234-247-1534, Anna



**THANK  
YOU!**

### **THANK YOU TO OUR PARISH VOLUNTEERS**

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our parish volunteers who generously gave their time, talent, and love in preparing the traditional foods that bless our community. Your hard work in making **kolachi, stuffed cabbage, halushky, and pyrohy** was truly a labor of love.

Through your dedication, these meals became more than food—they became a sign of fellowship, tradition, and care for one another.

May God reward you for your generosity, bless your hands for the work you have done, and grant you health and peace for all you continue to give. We are deeply grateful for each of you.

### **THANK YOU TO OUR BINGO VOLUNTEERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our dedicated Bingo volunteers and to everyone who participated and supported this effort. Through your generosity, hard work, and spirit of community, **\$4,200 was raised to assist those affected by the Austintown Residence Building Explosion**, with all proceeds donated through the **American Red Cross**.

Your willingness to give your time, talents, and resources has made a real difference in the lives of those facing great loss. This event was a powerful reminder of how compassion and unity can bring hope and help to those in need.

May God bless each of you for your kindness and generosity, and may He reward your good works many times over.

**Thank you for being a blessing to others.**

## *Saint Nicholas Play*

Dec 14 after Liturgy, at the Church  
We are honored to invite all children,  
parents and stewards of Saints Peter &  
Paul Parish to come to our Saint  
Nicholas play on Sunday, Dec 15 after  
Divine Liturgy.

**We are hoping and praying that  
Saint Nicholas will come to  
distribute his secret gifts.**

- Saint Nicholas -



# The CHRISTMAS STORY



Thank you to the Sunday School Children,  
the Teachers, and Parents for the wonderful play!  
May St. Nicholas bring his sacred gifts to all the kids and every family!

**Oy khto, khto Mykolaya lyubyt',  
Oy khto, khto Mykolayu sluzhyt',**

**Tomu Svyatyy Mykolayu |  
Na vsyakyy chas pomahay, |  
Mykolayu | (2x)**

**Oh him who, loves Saint Nicholas,  
Oh him who, serves Saint Nicholas,**

**Then for him Saint Nicholas |  
At all times a helper be, |  
O Saint Nicholas | 2x**

## St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

Saint Nicholas is remembered not for great words or public recognition, but for quiet, faithful deeds of love. His life teaches us that holiness is most often lived in secret, through mercy shown when no one is watching and generosity offered without expectation of reward. As a bishop of the Church, he understood that true authority is expressed through service. He cared deeply for the poor, defended the innocent, and gave generously to those in need, always seeing in every human person the living image of Christ.

Saint Nicholas did not separate faith from life. His prayer naturally flowed into action, and his love for God was revealed through his love for others. He listened to the cries of the suffering and responded with compassion, courage, and humility. In a world marked by injustice and fear, he became a quiet sign of God's tenderness and care, reminding the faithful that the Gospel must be lived, not merely proclaimed.

The stories of his good works—providing dowries for poor daughters, rescuing the oppressed, protecting the innocent, and feeding the hungry—are not legends meant simply to entertain us or inspire nostalgia. They are lessons meant to shape our hearts and guide our lives. Saint Nicholas did not ask whether people deserved help or whether their situation was their own fault; he responded because love demanded it. His generosity flowed from a heart fully surrendered to God, a heart that trusted completely in divine providence.

These acts of mercy reveal a man who understood the suffering of others as his own. Saint Nicholas recognized that when one member of the Body of Christ suffers, all suffer together. His compassion was not limited by convenience, fear, or social expectations. Instead, it was rooted in a deep awareness that every act of love offered to another is ultimately offered to Christ Himself.

Today, we carry the tradition of Saint Nicholas not simply by telling his story or celebrating his feast day, but by continuing his way of life. His legacy lives on whenever generosity is shown quietly, whenever help is offered without recognition, and whenever the vulnerable are defended and the suffering are comforted. When we give without seeking praise, when we notice those who are easily forgotten, and when we choose mercy over judgment, we honor his memory in the most authentic way. Each act of kindness done in his name becomes a living continuation of his witness in the world. To remember Saint Nicholas is to allow his example to challenge us. He calls us to move beyond comfortable faith and toward faith that acts, sacrifices, and loves courageously. In a world often driven by self-interest, his life reminds us that true greatness is found in humility and service.

It is important to remember Saint Nicholas because he reminds us that faith must be lived daily. True devotion is not found only in prayers, hymns, or celebrations, but in concrete acts of love rooted in Christ. In remembering Saint Nicholas, we are reminded of who we are called to be: servants of Christ, bearers of mercy, protectors of the vulnerable, and witnesses of God's generous and transforming love in the world.

May Saint Nicholas inspire us to give freely, love deeply, and serve faithfully, so that through our lives, our choices, and our compassion, Christ may be revealed to others.



## Reflection on the Rich Young Ruler and the Kingdom of God

The encounter between Christ and the rich young ruler reveals a profound truth about the Kingdom of God. The young man approaches Jesus sincerely, seeking eternal life. He is moral, obedient, and eager to do what is right. Yet when Christ looks into his heart and asks him to let go of his possessions, he walks away sorrowful. His sadness reveals the quiet struggle within him: he desires the Kingdom of God, but he is not yet free enough to enter it.

This story reminds us that the Kingdom of God is not earned by good behavior alone. The young ruler had kept the commandments, but something still stood between him and Christ. His wealth was not simply money—it was security, identity, and control. Jesus does not condemn him for being rich, but lovingly invites him to freedom. The sorrow comes not from Christ's demand, but from the realization that following Him requires trust beyond comfort.

Christ's words—"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God"—are not a judgment against wealth, but a warning about attachment. Anything we cling to more than God can become a barrier. Wealth, status, habits, pride, or fear can quietly take the place of trust in God. The Kingdom of God requires open hands, not clenched fists.

The disciples are shocked, because they too believed that blessing was a sign of God's favor. Jesus corrects them by teaching that salvation is not a human achievement but a gift of grace: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Entry into the Kingdom is not about what we give up, but about who we trust. What seems impossible for us becomes possible when God transforms the heart.

The rich young ruler leaves in sadness, but the story does not end in despair. His question remains open to us. Each of us must ask: what do I hold onto that keeps me from fully following Christ? The Kingdom of God begins when we are willing to place everything—our security, our identity, our future—into God's hands.

The call of Christ is not a call to loss, but to life. What we release for the sake of the Kingdom is not destroyed, but transformed. And in that freedom, we discover that the Kingdom of God is not something we possess—it is something we enter, by faith, humility, and trust in Him.



# Люблячої Пам`яті Василя Зомчака

дорогий Чоловік, Син, Батько та Дідусь  
У 40-й день з дня його спочинку

## **Татова любов**

Татова любов була тиха. Без багато слів та емоцій.  
Татова любов була у важкій праці задля благополуччя сім'ї.

Вона була у підйомах досвіта поки всі ще спали.

Татова любов була у свіжих цукерках після роботи у старому пакеті в котрому брав собі обід.

У міцних обіймах, без слів, бо через хвилювання не міг промовити нічого.

Вона була у розуміючому погляді, де не потрібно було пояснювати.

У радісних очах, через різні досягнення дітей.

У принесеній ялинці до Різдва.

Татова любов була у подарованому велосипеді, у час коли не було на те грошей.

У назбираних грибах з самого ранку.

У відремонтованих іграшках та пристроях, коли щось поламали.

У терплячості та витривалості - у тата ніколи не було проблем...а вірніше ніколи про них не розповідав.

У постійному питанні до дітей, навіть коли подорослішали, «Скажи чи тобі щось треба?»

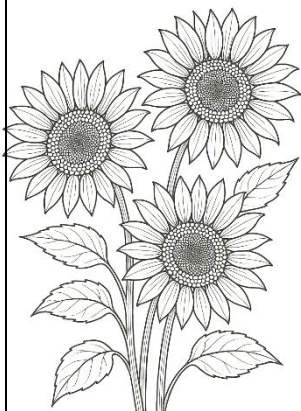
Татова любов була у жертвовності, все віддавав би заради дітей.

У щирому сміху та щирих сльозах - тато ніколи не лукавив.

Вона була у тому особливому поцілунку, який важко поплутали з іншими.

Батькова любов була тиха. Без багато слів та емоцій.

І навіть тепер, ця любов нікуди не пропала. Вона не зникла. Хоч і тиха, та зовсім без слів..



### **1 Солунян 4:13–18**

*Не хочу ж, браття, щоб ви не знали про тих, що заснули, щоб ви не сумували, як і інші, що не мають надії. Бо коли ми віруємо, що Ісус умер і воскрес, то так само і Бог приведе з Ним тих, що заснули в Ісусі. Бо це говоримо вам словом Господнім, що ми, живі, які залишимося до пришествя Господнього, не попередимо тих, що заснули. Бо Сам Господь із наказом, при голосі архангела і при сурмі Божій зійде з неба, і мертві в Христі воскреснуть першими; потім ми, що живемо і залишимося, будемо разом із ними піднесені на хмарах назустріч Господу на повітрі, і так завжди будемо з Господом. Отож, утішайте один одного цими словами.*

- о. Микола Зомчак, син

# In Loving Memory of Vasyl Zomchak

*Beloved Husband, Son, Father, and Grandfather*

On the 40<sup>th</sup> day of his repose

## **Father's Love**

Father's love was quiet.

Without many words or emotions.

Father's love was reflected in hard work for the well-being of the family. It was in getting up before dawn when everyone else was still asleep.

Father's love was in the candies brought home after work, carried in the old bag he used to take his lunch in.

In hugs without words, because of the emotion he could never speak.

It was in an understanding look, where no explanations were needed. In joyful eyes over the different achievements of his children.

In the Christmas tree brought home for Christmas.

Father's love was in a bicycle that he bought for us, at a time when there was no money for it.

In going picking mushrooms early in the morning.

In repaired toys and devices when something was broken.

In patience and endurance – father never had problems.. or rather, he never spoke about them.

In the question to his children, even when they were grown: "Tell me, do you need anything?"

Father's love was in sacrifice – he would give everything for his children.

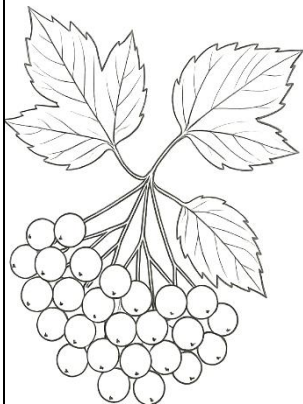
In sincere laughter and sincere tears – father was never insincere.

It was in that special kiss, impossible to confuse with any other.

Father's love was quiet. Without many words or emotions.

And even now, this love has not disappeared. It didn't vanish.

Even though it's quiet, it is now completely without words.



### **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18:**

*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

- Fr. Mykola Zomchak, son

# The Divine Liturgy

The Liturgy is not a place for the perfect, but a space where God heals the imperfect. We do not go there to display our holiness, but to receive strength to struggle with our own weakness. The Lord does not expect flawlessness from us; He expects presence. Just come. Standing beside Christ is more important than feeling something great.

Even if your mind wanders, even if your heart is cold, even if you are standing there and it feels like you understand nothing—stay anyway. For where the *Mystery* is celebrated, God Himself is present, and even your silent presence is already participation in His grace.

We often seek spiritual feelings, wanting to be moved, wanting to feel something—but true faith is not found in feelings, it is found in faithfulness. To stand before God when the soul is silent is already prayer. It is a sign that you do not give up, that faithfulness matters more to you than emotions.

And with time, quietly and unnoticed, this faithfulness will begin to change you. Like clothing that absorbs the fragrance of incense even if you bought nothing, so too the soul that stands in God's presence will begin to be filled with a gentle light, peace, and warmth.

The most important thing is to come. Even if you stand like a log, even if your heart feels dark, even if you think you are unworthy. Because every step toward the church is a step toward the Father who is waiting. And one day you will feel that you are no longer simply standing—you are living the Liturgy, breathing it. And then it will no longer be you who comes to God, but God who lives in you.



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## Prayer:

Almighty God,

As we stand before You in the Divine Liturgy, gather our scattered thoughts and quiet our restless hearts. Teach us to be attentive, not only with our minds, but with our souls, remembering that we stand on holy ground.

Grant us gratitude for this sacred gift, for the mystery of Your presence among us, and for the mercy You offer again and again. Help us not to come as spectators, but as faithful participants in Your saving work.

When our minds wander and our hearts grow cold, do not turn away from us. Instead, draw us closer, and teach us to remain—trusting that even silent standing before You is already prayer.

Open our eyes to recognize Your grace, our ears to receive Your word, and our hearts to be changed by what we receive. May the Liturgy shape our lives, so that we leave this holy place renewed, thankful, and ready to live what we have prayed.

Amen.

# Orthodox Christianity 101

## Incarnation

### And He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man

The divine Son of God was born as a man from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit ([Mt 1](#); [Lk 1](#)). The Church teaches that the virgin birth is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy ([Is 7.14](#)), and that it is as well the fulfillment of the longings of all men for salvation which are found in all religions and philosophies in human history. Only God can save the world. Man alone cannot do it because it is man himself who must be saved. Therefore, according to Orthodox doctrine, the virgin birth is necessary not at all because of a false idolization of virginity as such or because of a sinful repulsion to normal human sexuality. Nor is it necessary as some would contend to give “added weight” to the moral teachings of Jesus. The virgin birth is understood as a necessity because the one who is born must not be merely a man like all others needing salvation. The Saviour of the world cannot merely be one of the race of Adam born of the flesh like all of the others. He must be “not of this world” in order to save the world.

Jesus is born from the Virgin Mary because he is the divine Son of God, the Saviour of the world. It is the formal teaching of the Orthodox Church that Jesus is not a “mere man” like all other men. He is indeed a real man, a whole and perfectly complete man with a human mind, soul and body. But he is the man which the Son and Word of God has become. Thus, the Church formally confesses that Mary should properly be called Theotokos, which means literally “the one who gives birth to God.” For the one born of Mary is, as the Orthodox Church sings at Christmas: “... he who from all eternity is God.”

*Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child! (Kontakion of the Nativity)*

Jesus of Nazareth is God, or, more accurately, the divine Son of God in human flesh. He is a true man in every way. He was born. He grew up in obedience to his parents. He increased in wisdom and stature ([Lk 2.51–52](#)). He had a family life with “brethren” ([Mk 3.31–34](#)), who according to Orthodox doctrine were not children born of Mary who is confessed as “ever-virgin,” but were either cousins or children of Joseph.

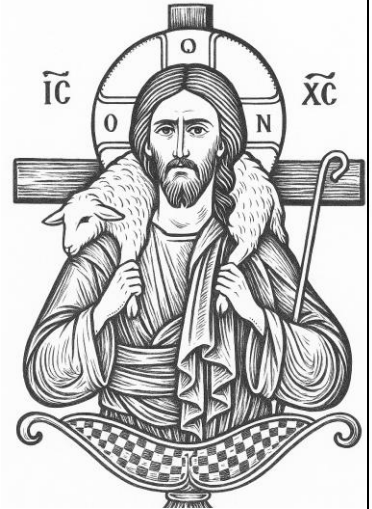
As a man Jesus experienced all normal and natural human experiences such as growth and development, ignorance and learning, hunger, thirst, fatigue, sorrow, pain, and disappointment. He also knew human temptation, suffering, and death. He took these things upon himself “for us men and for our salvation.”

*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. For surely it was not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect ... to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted (Heb 2.9–18).*

Christ has entered the world becoming like all men in all things except sin.

*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 [God the Father] who judges justly (1?Pet 2.22; Heb 4.15).*

Jesus was tempted, but he did not sin. He was perfect in every way, absolutely obedient to God the Father; speaking His words, doing His works, and accomplishing His will. As a man, Jesus fulfilled his role perfectly as the Perfect Man, the new and final Adam. He did all things that man fails to do, being in everything the most perfect human response to the divine initiative of God toward creation. In this sense, the Son of God as man “recapitulated” the life of Adam, i.e., the entire human race, bringing man and his world back to God the Father and allowing for a new beginning of life free from the power of sin, the devil, and death.



As the Saviour-Messiah, Christ fulfilled as well all of the prophecies and expectations of the Old Testament, fulfilling and crowning in final and absolute perfection all that was begun in Israel for human and cosmic salvation. Thus, Christ is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, the completion of the Law of Moses, the fulfillment of the prophets and Himself the Final Prophet, the King and the Teacher, the one Great High Priest of Salvation and the Perfect Sacrificial Victim, the New Passover and the Bestower of the Holy Spirit upon all creation. It is in this role as Messiah-King of Israel and Saviour of the world that Christ insisted upon His identity with God the Father and called Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Resurrection and the Life, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Door to the Sheepfold, the Good Shepherd, the Heavenly Son of Man, the Son of God, and God Himself, the I AM (Gospel of Saint John).

## **The Ecumenical Councils**

In the third and fourth centuries attempts were made to teach that although Jesus is truly the incarnate Son and Word of God, that the Son and Word Himself is not fully and totally divine, but a creature-even the most exalted creature-but a creature made by God like everything else that was made. This was the teaching of the Arians. Against this teaching, the fathers, such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Theologian of Nazianzus defended the definition of faith of the first and second ecumenical councils which held that the Son and Word of God-incarnate in human form as Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah-Christ of Israel-is not a creature, but is truly divine with the same divinity as God the Father and the Holy Spirit. This was the defense of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity which preserved for the Church of all ages the faith that Jesus is indeed the divine Son of God, of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one of the Holy Trinity.

At the same time, in the fourth century, it was also necessary for the Church to reject the teaching of a certain Apollinarius, who claimed that although Jesus was indeed the incarnate Son and Word of God, the incarnation consisted in the Word merely taking a human body and not the fullness of human nature. This was the doctrine that Jesus had no real human soul, no human mind, no human spirit, but that the divine Son of God, who exists eternally with the Father and the Spirit, merely dwelt in a human body, in human flesh, as in a temple. It is for this reason that every official doctrinal statement in the Orthodox Church, including all of the statements of the ecumenical councils, always insists that the Son of God became man of the Virgin Mary with a rational soul and body; in other words, that the Son of God really became human in the full meaning of the word and that Jesus Christ was and is a real human being, having and being everything that every human being has and is. This is nothing other than the teaching of the Gospels and the New Testament scriptures generally.

*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same nature .. [being] made like His brethren in every respect. (Heb 2.14-17)*

## **The Nestorian Controversy**

In the fifth century a long and difficult controversy developed over the true understanding of the person and nature of Jesus Christ. The third ecumenical council in Ephesus in 431, following the teaching of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, was most concerned to defend the fact that the One who was born of the Virgin Mary was no one other than the divine Son of God in human flesh. It was necessary to defend this fact most explicitly because some in the Church, following Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, were teaching that the Virgin Mary should not be called Theotokos-a term already used in the Church's theology-because it was claimed that the Virgin gave birth to the man Jesus whom the Son of God had become in the incarnation, and not to the Son Himself. In this view it was held that there is a division between the Son of God born in eternity from God the Father and the Son of Man born from the Virgin in Bethlehem; and that although there is certainly a real "connection" between them, Mary merely gave birth to the man. As such, it was held, Mary could be called Theotokos only by some sort of symbolic and overly-pious stretching of the word, but that it is rather dogmatically accurate to call her Christotokos (the one who gave birth to the Messiah) or Anthropotokos (the one who gave birth to the Man that the Son of God has become in the incarnation).

Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the fathers of the council in Ephesus rejected the Nestorian doctrine and claimed that the term Theotokos for the Virgin Mary is completely and totally accurate and must be retained if the Christian faith is to be properly confessed and the Christian life properly lived. The term must be defended because there can be no division of any sort between the eternal Son and Word of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, and Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary. Mary's child is the eternal and divine Son of God. He-and no one else-was born of her as a child. He-and no one else-was

incarnate in human flesh from her. He-and no one else-became man in the manger in Bethlehem. There can be no "connection" or "conjunction" between God's Son and Mary's Son because they are in fact one and the same person. God's Son was born of Mary. God's Son is divine; He is God. Therefore, Mary gave birth to God in the flesh, to God as a man. Therefore, Mary is truly Theotokos. The battle cry of St Cyril and the Council in Ephesus was just this: The Son of God and the Son of Man-one Son!

### **The Council of Chalcedon**

This teaching about Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, was further elaborated and explained by the definition of the fourth ecumenical council in Chalcedon in 451. This was necessary because there was a tendency to stress the divine nature of Christ to such an extent that His true human nature was underplayed to the point almost of being rejected. At the fourth council the well-known formulation was made which says that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son and Word of God is one person (or hypostasis) having two full and complete natures: human and divine. Inspired particularly by the letter of Saint Leo, the Pope of Rome, the fourth council insisted that Jesus is exactly what God the Father is in relation to His divinity. This was a direct reference to the Nicene Creed which claims that the Son of God is "of one essence with the Father," which simply means that what God the Father is, the Son is also: Light from Light, True God from True God. And the council insisted as well that in the incarnation the Son of God became exactly what all human beings are, confessing that Jesus Christ is also "of one essence" with all human beings in respect to His humanity. This doctrine was and is defended as teaching nothing other than the apostolic faith as recorded in the Gospels and the New Testament writings, for example, those of the Apostle Paul: *though He was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not count equality with God a thing to be clung to, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a servant, being found in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross* ([Phil 2.6-8](#); See also Heb 1-2, [Jn 1](#)).

The critical words in the definition of faith of the Council of Chalcedon are the following: Following the holy fathers we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], and He is perfect in Divinity and perfect in Humanity, true God and true Man, of a rational soul and [human] body consisting, of one essence with the Father as touching His Divinity and of one essence with us as touching His Humanity; made in all things like unto us, with the exception of sin only; begotten of His Father before all ages according to His Divinity: but in these last days, for us men and for our salvation, born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, Theotokos, according to His Humanity. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, without mixture and without change, without separation and without division and that without the distinction of natures being removed by such union, but rather that the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and Hypostasis, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old have spoken concerning Him, and as Jesus Christ has taught us, and as the Creed of the fathers has delivered to us.

A number of Christians did not accept the Council of Chalcedon and broke communion with those who did accept it. They did so because they thought that the council had in fact resurrected the wrong doctrine of Nestorius by insisting on the "two natures" after the incarnation, however strongly and firmly the "union" of the two natures was insisted upon. These Christians were called the monophysites (from the term meaning "one nature" after the incarnation), and they continue until today in separation from the Chalcedonian Orthodox in the Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian churches. Hopefully, one day, by God's grace, this dispute will be resolved and those who adhere to Chalcedon the Eastern Orthodox Christians, as well as the traditional Roman Catholics and Protestants-will come to a unity of faith with those who reject Chalcedon in regard to its explication of the union of the divine and the human in the one person of Christ our Lord. Whatever the future may hold by God's grace, however, it is still the firm teaching of the Orthodox Church that the Council of Chalcedon is in strict adherence with the anti-Nestorian doctrines of Saint Cyril and the third ecumenical council in Ephesus. The virtue of the fourth council, in the Orthodox view, is that it defines very clearly the fact that when the Son of God was born as a man from the Virgin Mary, Theotokos, He did not cease to be God or change in His Divinity, while becoming a complete and perfect man in His incarnate Humanity. For salvation itself requires the perfect union of Divinity and Humanity in the one Person of Jesus Christ; 21 union where God is God and Man is Man, and yet where the two become one in perfect unity: without fusion or change, and without division or separation.

