

St. Demetrius Orthodox Church

Embrace For Christmas

Every year at Christmas time, I reflect upon my life and reflect upon the past year God has blessed me with in order to shed insight on my message for Christmas. It's easy to comment on the hectic schedules and the endless "to do" lists that we encounter during this season. It is also easy to comment on the joys of opening gifts, eating cookies, and visiting family and friends during this holiday season. However, this joyful message becomes difficult to reflect upon when one suffers a personal loss of a loved one. Where do you find meaning in Christmas when you feel weak, vulnerable, and empty due to the death of a loved one? As I prayed before The Blessed Mother of God Icon and saw her sweet embrace of her Son, our Savior, as an infant in her arms, the answer to my reflection became clear. The meaning of Christmas, especially in the times of the death of a loved one, is found in the loving embrace of the Theotokos.

Theologically, Christmas is about the Incarnation of the Son of God. God becoming man in order for man to become like God. By taking on our human nature, God saved it, and deifies it through the waters of Baptism, and we become children of Light. God the Father did not send His Son into this world with power and glory, but just the opposite. Jesus was born Incarnate of the Virgin Mary as a helpless, vulnerable child, lying in a manger in a cave. Jesus emptied Himself of His Power and Glory, and became weak and humbled Himself for our salvation. God became weak, and in His weakness conquered sin and death. It is in that state of weakness and vulnerability where Mary opens her arms, not only to embrace her Son as a new born infant at the first Christmas, but us as well, who are in need of comfort and strength this Christmas.

Spiritually, no one can provide a more perfect "hug" than Mary the Theotokos. Mary's sweet Christmas embrace is the reflection of the Church. She feeds us with the Bread of Life (John 6:35); she dresses us up with a "garment of incorruption" and a "robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10); she washes us of our sins (Acts 22:16) with the laver of regeneration; she gives us drink from the fountain of life and shelters us "under the shadow of her wings" (Psalm 17:8), and gives us a place of "rest for our souls." The answer to the meaning of Christmas is found in the unconditionally loving arms of Mary. She is eager to embrace us in our weakness and able to provide perfect love. Like the helpless and vulnerable infant Jesus we need to embrace Mary the Theotokos, and realize why God became weak. God became weak in order to communicate to us His Love.

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This newsletter is sponsored in memory of my wife, Ellen and in appreciation to the parishioners of St. Demetrius Church for their love and prayers.

May Her Memory Be Eternal!

-Milan Koprivica

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Embrace For Christmas

God sent His Son to become incarnate, because we are affected by death, suffering, and loss. Christmas embraces us with new life. Death is a colossal crack in life. It breaks, crushes, shatters, and eliminates life. However, Christ came into this world to offer new life. His birth gives us new birth. His death gives us the promise of eternal life. The Baby born in Bethlehem defeated death. That same Baby also embraced His Mother. Thank God we can embrace her loving care like her Son!

The meaning of Christmas is not the elimination of all our pains, problems, diseases, and death, but that Christ overcame them all, and gives us new life. He comes to be God with us. He comes to share our pain and sorrow and ease it with His presence. He comes to us in the midst of our problems and gives us the strength to deal with them. He comes to help us endure our illnesses and to know wholeness and holiness in Him. He comes incarnate to us in order for we to become one with Him in Communion. The meaning of Christmas is to embrace the Incarnate Son in His weakness, and embrace Mary in our weakness, and allow the grace of God to give you new life. You will open many gifts this Christmas, however, take the time to open the greatest gift of all, the embrace of love! +Fr. Dusan

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will be on **Sunday, December 6** following Divine Liturgy. There will be 3 vacancies for Parish Council and 2 vacancies for auditors. Those who want to be eligible to run for Parish Council or who want to be able to participate fully in the Annual Parish meeting need to be sure that they are voting members of the parish according to the bylaws:

1. Be a baptized and Christmated Orthodox Christian.
1. Be at least 18 years of age.
2. Partake of the Sacraments of Private Confession and Communion in the Parish at least once a year.
3. Has been a member of the Parish for a prior consecutive six month period.
4. Regularly fulfill such financial obligations as may be established by the Parish.

Please see Fr. Dusan if you are interested in running for one of these vacancies or if you have questions.

Mission/Outreach Work

As an ongoing church project, St. Demetrius will be collecting can vegetables every Sunday. Each week, we deliver our collection to the Immanuel Lutheran Church Food Pantry. The pantry distributes bundles of food to local residents that are in need of assistance.

*An offering envelope is enclosed
in this newsletter for your holiday
gift giving convenience.*

Thank you!

Bible Questions

Answers to last months questions:

1. The book of numbers has to do with taking a census of the whole community of Israelites. How many tribes were to be counted? **12 tribes**
2. How many sons did Aaron have? **4 sons**
3. What four words are the start of many of the paragraphs? **The Lord said to Moses.**
4. Who was chosen to succeed Moses as the leader of the Israelites? **Joshua**
5. What day was the day of Atonement? **The tenth day of the seventh month.**

The following answers may be found in the book of Deuteronomy

1. Almost all of this book is made up of quotes of one person - who?
2. How old was Moses when he died?
3. Where was Moses buried?
4. What were the three cities that Moses set as a refuge to a person guilty of homicide?
5. When Moses again gave the ten commandments to his people, what was the fifth commandment?

The Nativity Fast Season

We are created in God's "image and likeness." To become "like" God (God-like, Holy) we must always clean our souls and bodies by deepening and renewing our life in God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Make good use of the Christmas Fast: Be good stewards and give to God your time, talent and resources to build up the Body of Christ, the Church; her life, community and witness to the world. Give alms to the poor and homeless. Give back your life to God.... Pray unceasingly, "for Peace from Above and the salvation of our souls." Read the Bible daily; Psalms, Proverbs, the Prophecies of the Christ-Child and the Christmas story. Attend Church Services weekly Great Vespers (Sat. 5 pm) Divine Liturgy (Sun. 9:30 am), Christmas Eve Services Thurs. 4 pm and Christmas Day 10 am. Participate in Services & Sacraments: Confess your sins and receive Communion for Christmas with all your family members. Fast from sin and from heavy fleshy foods to lighten the soul and body. Rather consume grains, fruits, vegetables and fish acquiring virtue (faith, hope, love, joy, humility, endurance, strength, charity, etc). Examine your thoughts and feelings in light of Christ's life, example and teachings found in the Bible. Change ("repent") sinful habits for those that are healthy and life-giving. Feast: Give thanks to God for all the gifts He bestows upon you; life, health, material success and all good things. You are an "icon" (image) of the Living God: "incarnate" (give flesh or make visible) your Christian life every day.

St. Demetrius Christmas Card

Dear Members and Friends of St. Demetrius;

We will be sending out the Parish Christmas Card next month. The deadline is **Sunday, December 13, 2009**. Please fill out the form below and send it with a minimum donation of \$ 25.00.

Christmas Card Donation Form

Name (s) _____

Amount \$ _____

**St. Demetrius Orthodox
Church**

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Please remember in your prayers

For Good Health

Van Christoff
Stella Stamatakis
Winnie Wangler
Michael Wangler
Kalliopi Anastasiadis
Helen Tannis
Mary Lazaroff
Elaine Kleiner
Patty Canalas
Phil Lazaroff

Departed

Deno Demos
Ted Chames
Ellen Koprivica
Mike Egnatuk

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