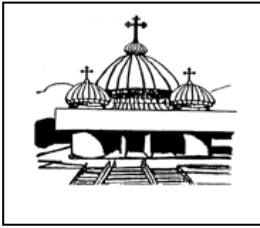


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St. Mary's Church Bulletin



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Pastor: Fr. Petro (Peter)Bodnar

DIVINE LITURGY:

SUNDAY: 9:00 a.m. (Ukrainian) **SUNDAY** 10:30 a.m. (English)

Confession: Before Divine Liturgies 9:00 am and 10:30 am on Sundays or anytime upon request.

Baptisms & Marriages: By prior arrangement (at least 1 year before the marriage date), through the parish office.

Visitations & Anointing of the Sick: Please notify the office if a member of your family is in need of a visit.

December 27, 2020

Sunday after Christmas Apostle and First Martyr & Archdewacon Stephen

Prayer Intentions Dec. 20- Dec. 27

Saturday: 4:00 pm For Parishioners

Sunday: 9:00 am +Peter Woloshyn – Elenor Stasiuk

10:30 am Special Intention for priests – Barbara-Ann Spak

Tuesday 9:30 am +Ilene & Paul Rehaluk

Wednesday 9:30 am 40 Day +Pauline Yawney

Thursday 9:30 am Thanksgiving for Bodnar Family -Barbara-Ann Spak

Friday 10:00 am Special Intention for Jean Gaba and Family

Saturday: 4:00 p.m. For Parishioners

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. For the Deceased in Tkach & Danylko family

10:30 a.m. Special intention for Fr. Peter – Barbara-Ann Spak

IMPORTANT NOTICE – Please be reminded that due to Covid 19 protocol, the church must be locked at the beginning of the service. Please, arrive at least 10 minutes before the service starts.

Lock-down Pre-Registration : The Pandemic lock-down will affect the Sunday December 27 & January 3 Divine Liturgies. You must pre-register to attend the Sunday Divine Liturgy by calling Fr. Peter 705-665-2869. Attendance must not exceed 10 which includes the priest, servers and cantors.

Divine Liturgies are live-streamed and can be viewed by clicking the Facebook symbol on St Mary's website. You do not require a Facebook account.

MASKS ARE NOW MANDATORY IN CHURCH.

E transfers are still accepted - Thank you to all who continually supported our parish during interesting times.

SOLEMNITY OF THE LORD'S CHRISTMAS *HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS*

Vatican Basilica Thursday, 24 December 2020

On this night is the great prophecy of Isaiah: "A child was born for us, we were given a son" (*Is 9:5*).

We were given a son. It is often said that the greatest joy of life is the birth of a child. It is something extraordinary, that changes everything, sets in motion unexpected energies and overcomes efforts, discomforts and sleepless vigils, because it brings great happiness, in front of which nothing seems to weigh. This is Christmas: the birth of Jesus is the novelty that allows us every year to be reborn inside, to find in him the strength to face every trial. Yes, because his birth is for us: for me, for you, for all of us, for each one. *For* it is the word that returns on this holy night:

"A child was *born for us*", he prophetic Isaiah; "Today the *Savior was born for us*", we repeated to the Psalm; Jesus "gave himself for *us*" (*Tt 2:14*), proclaimed Saint Paul; and the angel in the Gospel announced: "Today a *Savior was born for you*" (*Lk 2:11*). For me, for you.

But what do you want to tell us *about this for us*? May the Son of God, blessed by nature, come to make us children blessed by grace. Yes, God comes into the world as a son to make us children of God. What a wonderful gift! Today God amazes us and says to each of us: "You are a wonder". Sister, brother, don't lose heart. Are you tempted to feel wrong? God says, "No, you're *my son*!" Do you feel like you can't do it, the fear of being inadequate, the

fear of not getting out of the test *tunnel*? God says, "Come on, I'm with you." He does not tell you in words, but by having himself as a son like you and for you, to remind you of the starting point of your every rebirth: to recognize you as a son of God, daughter of God. This is the starting point of any rebirth. This is the indestructible heart of our hope, the incandescent core that underlies existence: beneath our qualities and defects, stronger than the wounds and failures of the past, fears and anxiety for the future, there is this truth: we are beloved children. And God's love for us does not depend and will never depend on us: it is *free love*. Tonight finds no other explanation: only, grace. Everything is grace. The gift is free, without the merit of each of us, pure grace. Last night, Saint Paul told us, "the grace of God has indeed appeared" (*Tt 2:11*). Nothing is more valuable.

We were given a son. The Father did not give us anything, but his own only-begotten Son, who is all his joy. Yet, if we look at man's ingratitude towards God and injustice towards so many of our brothers and sisters, a doubt arises: the Lord was right to give us so much, is it good to still have confidence in us? Don't you overestimate us? yes, he overestimates us, and he does it because he loves us to death. He can't help but love us. It's so different from us. It always loves us, better than we can get for ourselves. It's his secret to getting into our hearts. God knows that the only way to save us, to heal us inside, is to love us: there is no other way. He knows that we only improve by welcoming his tireless *love*, which does not change, but changes us. Only the love of Jesus transforms life, heals the deepest wounds, frees from vicious circles of dissatisfaction, anger and complaint.

We were given a son. In the poor manger of a dark stable there is precisely the Son of God. Another question arises: why did he come to light in the night, without worthy housing, in poverty and rejection, when he deserved to be born as the greatest king in the most beautiful of palaces? Because? To make us understand how much he loves our human condition: to the point of touching with his *concrete love* our worst misery. The Son of God was born discarded to tell us that every discarded person is the son of God. He came into the world as a weak and fragile child comes into the world, because we can welcome our frailties with tenderness. And to discover an important thing: as in Bethlehem, so even with us God loves to do great things through our poverty. He has put all our salvation in the manger of a stable and does not fear our poverty: let his mercy transform our miseries!

That's what it means that a child was born *for us*. But there is still one *for*, which the angel says to the shepherds: "This *for you* the sign: a child in a manger" (*Lk 2:12*). This sign, the Child in the manger, is also for us, to orient ourselves in life. In Bethlehem, which means "House of Bread", God stands in a manger, as if to remind us that to live we need Him as bread to eat. We need to let ourselves be crossed by his *free, tireless, concrete love*. How many times, however, hungry for fun, success and worldliness, we feed life with foods that do not feed and leave the void inside! The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, complained that while the ox and donkey know their manger, we, his people, do not know Him, the source of our lives (*cf. Is 1:2-3*). It is true: insatiable to have, we throw ourselves into so *many mangers of vanity*, foregoing the manger of Bethlehem. That manger, poor in everything and rich in love, teaches that the nourishment of life is to let ourselves be loved by God and to love

others. Jesus gives us an example: He, the Word of God, is an infant; does not speak, but offers life. We, on the other hand, talk a lot, *but we are often illiterate with goodness. We were given a son.* Those who have a small child know how much love and patience it takes. It is necessary to nourish it, look after it, clean it, take care of its fragility and needs, often difficult to understand. A child makes you feel loved, but also teaches you to love. God was born a child to push us to take care of others. His tender crying makes us understand how useless so many of our whims are; and we have so many! His unarmed and disarming love reminds us that the time we have is not to cry over us, but to console the tears of those who suffer. God dwells near us, poor and needy, to tell us that by serving the poor we will love Him. Since last night, as one poet wrote, "God's residence is beside mine. Furniture is love" (E. Dickinson, *Poems*, XVII).

We were given a son. It is you, Jesus, the Son who makes me a son. You love me as I am, not as I dream of being; I know! Embracing You, Manger Child, I embrace my life again. Welcoming You, Bread of Life, I too want to give my life. You saving me, teach me to serve. You who don't leave me alone, help me console your brothers, because You know from tonight they're all my brothers.

May the Child Jesus of Bethlehem, the little shepherd, bless you and all who are dear to you this Christmas and throughout the year. We wish you a blessed Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Fr. Petro Bodnar and family, Sonia Pawluch and family.

They see directly, before their eyes, the Lord restoring Zion. (Isaiah 52:8)

Two thousand years ago, something beautiful and earth-shattering happened. The eternal Son of God entered the world as a baby. Angels rejoiced that day. Shepherds exulted. Joseph was in awe. And Mary was filled with adoration.

Yet for all that, anyone passing by the manger would have seen nothing more than a poor tradesman and his wife trying to make the best of a hard situation.

That's the difference between the quick glance that comes from everyday "seeing" and the searching, penetrating vision that comes when God opens our hearts. One sees something ordinary and moves on, while the other senses Jesus' presence and kneels in worship.

Today, more than any other day, we can imitate Mary and Joseph and the shepherds as they gazed on the infant in the manger. We can welcome Jesus as the Savior who came to redeem us, not to condemn us. We can embrace him as our Good Shepherd who has laid down his life for us. We can praise him as the King of kings and Lord of lords, who rules all creation from a cross of self-giving love.

Don't miss this opportunity! Don't let the demands or the excitement of the day reduce you to "ordinary" seeing. Don't let the challenges of the present or the fear of the future or the pain of the past cloud your vision. Wherever you are and whatever you have to do, take some time alone to gaze at the sleeping Christ child. If it helps, use your nativity set. If you don't have one, use the cover of this magazine! Whatever it takes, focus on Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to help you *see* him.

Jesus has come to restore not only Zion but you and everyone around you. Come to him today, and let his promise of restoration fill you with hope and gratitude.

"O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!"