

Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 Jn. 3:2)

It is a very sweet promise. It is also a revelation. If you are not like Him now, chances are you do not see Him clearly, or know Him well. I think of this often when I am encountering other Christians. It is easy to have a facility with doctrine and Christian thought. However, that same facility can be deeply misleading. It is possible to mistake such knowledge for *saving* knowledge. At the same time, it is not uncommon to disregard such things as kindness, generosity, and gentleness as nothing more than "morality." The Christian life cannot be divided in such a manner. Saving knowledge is manifest as the *character* of Christ within us. Without this knowledge (which is synonymous with "character") everything we take to be "knowledge," such as doctrine and Scripture, will be woefully misunderstood, even to the point where it is working death within us.

In the Divine Liturgy, we are told, "Let us love one another, so that with one mind we may confess, 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity One in essence and undivided.'" The Creed is utterly opaque to a heart that is not at peace, or that is at enmity. The words, "I believe" in such a case, mean nothing (or worse).

The vast majority of Christians through the ages probably knew less "theology" than today's catechumenal converts. The Church has not thrived or survived through its mastery of such things. It is, instead, the character of Christ, acquired through the sacraments and the patient keeping of the Commandments that has preserved the faith. Such a foundation can fathom mysteries.

Only the character of Christ can understand the mysteries of the faith. The words of books, often the works of saints, will not yield themselves to a heart that has alienated itself from love.

St. John has another small passage worth noting:

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. (1 Jn. 4:7-8)

One way that I have understood this can be expressed in this manner: We only know God to the extent that we love our enemies. When we see hatred and anger, the lack of kindness and generosity, we may rest assured that we are not being confronted by God. It is a place for patience and generosity, but not a place of imitation. Are we like Him? If you truly want to know God, there is no other path.

By Fr. Stephen Freeman

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SERVICES

~~~ NO Church School Today—will resume on Jan 7th

### THIS WEEK—

-Orthodox Bible Study – Thursday Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> and Thursday Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>– 6pm @ The Tarot Bean Café- Meadville, PA

- The Royal Hours of *Theophany* – Friday, Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> 9:00am

- Vigil for Theophany- 6:00pm (with the Great Blessing of Waters)

-Moms' Group – Friday Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> 11am

- St. Basil's Divine Liturgy – (With blessing of waters- Cussewago Creek) Saturday, Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> – 9:30am ~ Blessing of Homes begins.

- Pro-Life Breakfast – 9:00am Bay Front Center – See Jane for tickets

- MARCH FOR LIFE – Friday, Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> – Washington D.C.

- Diocesan Family Ice Skating , PPG Place – Pittsburgh 4pm

- Pan-Orthodox Blessing of Lake Erie – Sat. Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> 12noon – Bay Front Voodoo Brewery to Foilow for lunch

- Erie March fro Life - Sat. Jan. 27<sup>th</sup> 11am Perry Square, Erie

Parish Council Meeting – Wed. Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm

Men's Fellowship Meeting – Sun. Jan. 14<sup>th</sup>

Ladies Altar Meeting – Sun. Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> Following Coffee Hour

**GREAT AND HOLY LENT BEGINS Feb. 19th**

### MISSIONS TEAM

**Christmas Party – Friday, Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> @ Parish House 6pm – Bring a dish to pass.**

—"*We bless Christ when we bless the poor*"

Fall/Winter Missions Drive: The missions committee is currently collecting clean winter clothing, blankets, and quilts which will be donated to The Upper Room of Erie. All donations can be dropped off in the first Sunday School Class room on the left.

\*Please support our Kenyan Orthodox children. Please contact Marilyn Filipos.

**I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak. Ezekiel 34:16**

**A monk visited Abba Sisos and told him he had fallen from grace. "What should I do, Abba? Sisos replied, "Get up again."**

**After a while, the monk returned again to ask,**

**"What can I do now ? I have fallen again."**

**"Get up again." The old man said to him, Never stop getting up again."**

## Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

25636 N. Mosiertown Rd Crossingville, PA 1641 Rev. Fr. Daniel

Mathewson – *Rector* **Lord's Day – Dec 31st, 2017** Parish phone: 814-

734-3801 Find us on the Web at: [www.orthodoxcrossingville.org](http://www.orthodoxcrossingville.org) or on

Face book: Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

## CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

**30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone**

**5. Leavetaking of the Nativity. Sunday after Nativity. Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord. Ven. Melania the Younger of Rome (439). Ven. Chiriacos (Kyriakis) of Bisericani (Romanian—160). Ven. Chiriacos (Kyriakis) of Tazlau (Romanian—1660).**

PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS: Those in need –Fr. Andrew, Fr. David, Mat. Donna, Fr. John, Fr. Nicholas, Fr. Paul, Fr. George, Mat. Suzanne, Meghan, Pearl, Karen, Mary, Stavros, Marilyn, Theona, Sara, Evan, Eugene, John, David, Ann, Thomas, Timothy, Jeremiah, Renee, Delani, Emily, George, Tanya, The Homebound... Vincent, Tanya, Mary-Louise, Richard, Helen, John, Irene, Ruth, Josephine, William, Claudia... Travelers.. ...Catechumens –Rick and Christian Our Missionaries Abroad...Fr. David and Mt. Rozanne, Military servers...Greg ...Departed Orthodox...Newly Departed – Ann, Katherine. Vernon, Paul, James, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy special requests... Anthony, Ian, Paul, Daleen, Penni, James, Sean, Liam, Susan, James, Joel, Jen, Roger, Jasmine, Cassandra ...

**Today's Hymns Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)**

**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 4 Troparion (for the Feast)**  
Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,  
has shone to the world the light of wisdom!  
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,  
were taught by a star to adore Thee,  
the Sun of righteousness,  
and to know Thee, the Orient from on high.//  
O Lord, glory to Thee!

**Tone 2 Troparion (of the Righteous Ones)**  
Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph,  
to David, the ancestor of God;  
you saw a Virgin great with child;  
you gave glory with the shepherds;  
you worshipped with the Magi;  
you received the news from the Angel.  
Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

**Tone 3 Kontakion (of the Righteous Ones)**  
Today godly David is filled with joy;  
Joseph and James offer praise.  
The glorious crown of their kinship with Christ fills them with  
great joy.  
They sing praises to the One ineffably born on earth,  
and they cry out: “O Compassionate One, save those who  
honor Thee!”

**Tone 3 Kontakion of the Feast**  
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.

**Tone 5 Prokeimenon**  
Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this  
generation forever. (Ps 11/12:7)  
*v: Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly! (Ps 11/12:1)*  
**Tone 4 Prokeimenon**  
God is wonderful in His saints, the God of Israel. (Ps 67/68:35)  
**Epistle Tone 5**  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*v: I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation. (Ps 88/89:1)*  
*v: For Thou hast said: “Mercy will be established forever; My truth will be prepared in the heavens.” (Ps 88/89:2)*  
**Tone 4**  
*v: Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness! (Ps 131/132:1)*

### **Today’s Scripture Readings:**

#### **Galatians 1:11-19 (Epistle, Sunday After)**

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

#### **Matthew 2:13-23 (Gospel, Sunday After)**

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.” Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

### **ARE YOU LIKE HIM?**

Years ago when I was in seminary, I served a small mission in Chicago. The priest was something of a mentor for me during that time. There was a young girl in the congregation, between two and three years-old. She was convinced that the priest was Jesus. (Well, he was wearing a white robe and he did have a beard.) One Sunday, during his sermon (delivered from the nave rather than the pulpit), she got loose from her parents and went bounding up the aisle. She stopped in front of him and said, “Jesus!” He stopped his sermon, picked her up, and continued while holding her in his arms. When the sermon was completed he took her back to her parents. After the service, he said to me, “Do you know what happened today?” He explained, “She will grow up and have no memory of me. But she will never forget that one day, Jesus picked her up in his sermon.”

I’ve never forgotten the lesson. In my own years in parishes, I’ve had more than a few children make the same connection. Every time, I remember that day, and I remember that it matters ever so much what I do. If I’m not Him, then, at least, I’d better be *like* Him.

A young couple was inquiring into the Church. They attended a class on the Church’s moral teaching. Their question startled me, “What concern should the church have with our moral life?” My answer startled them. “It’s quite simple. You’re raising my children.” There is no moral free-ride for adults. Whether you want it or not, children are watching you and making choices and decisions. Stanley Hauerwas, the noted theologian and ethicist, has said that the good news/bad news about children is that, no matter what you do, your children are most likely to turn out to be like you. And, of course, they will be *really like* you, not as you imagine yourself to be.

Among the more striking verses in Scripture is St. John’s declaration: