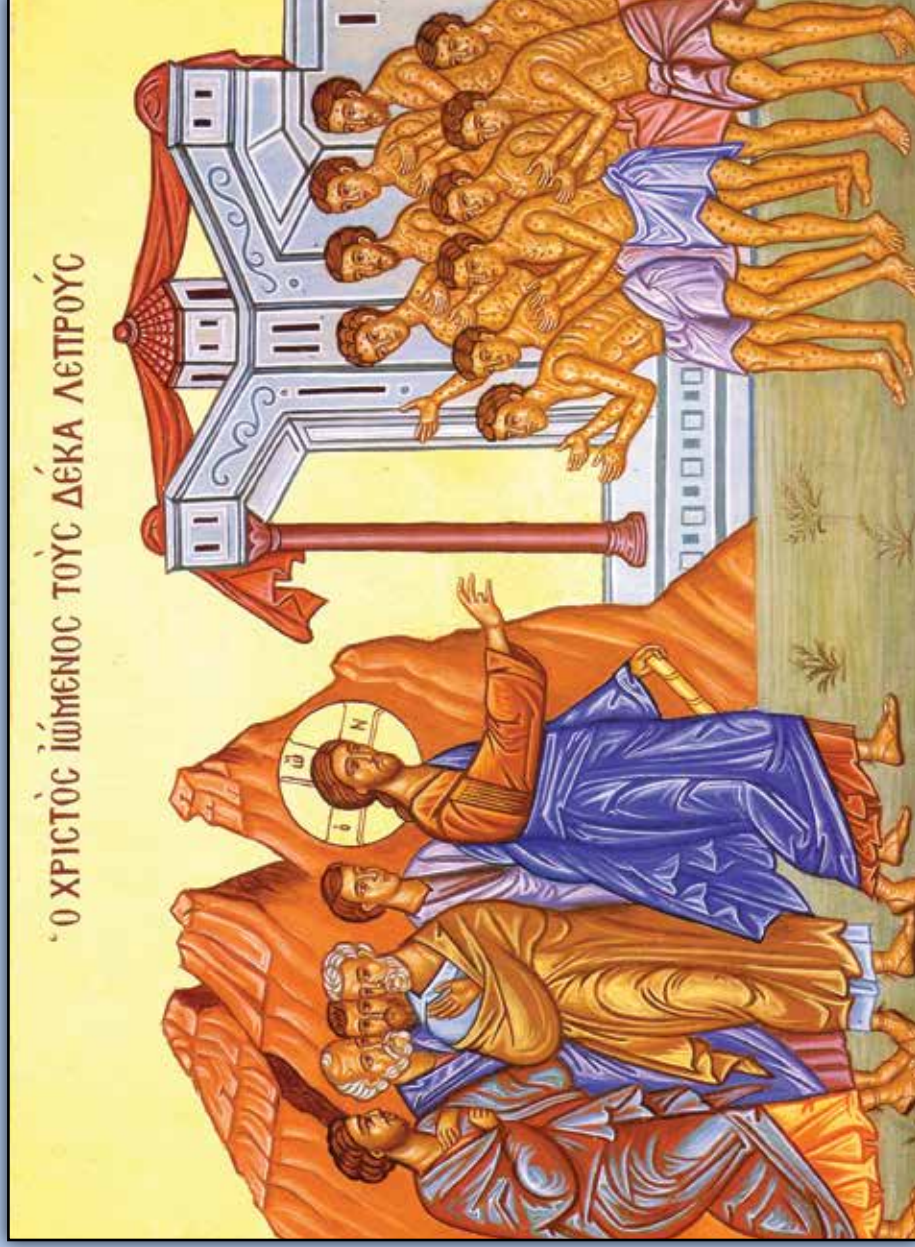


THIRTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST



Icon of the Cure of the Ten Lepers – Luke 17:12-19

Dec. 10, 2023: Twenty Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

Epistle: Col. 1: 12-18

Gospel: Lk. 17: 12-19

This Weekend	4:00 + Frank (Carol)
	10:30 For Our Parishioners; Baptism: Alexandra Hartman

Mon., Dec. 11

to

No Divine Liturgies

Fri., Dec. 15

Sat., Dec. 16

No Morning Divine Liturgy

2:00 **Confessions**

4:00 pm + George Chowanec (Family)

Sun., Dec. 17

10:30 For Our Parishioners

IT'S OKAY TO SAY "MERRY CHRISTMAS"



Every Christmas, anti-Christian groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Communist Party, various Islamic groups and Atheist groups sue some city for erecting a nativity scene on public property. Like-

wise, fearing they may be perceived as politically incorrect, a handful of retailers replace the word "Christmas" with "Holiday" in their marketing.

It may seem like a small issue, but these things are significant because

they diminish the importance of the Christian foundations of our society.

Our ideas of justice, mercy, liberty and love for our fellow man are deeply rooted in the Traditions of the Apostolic Church which includes the Bible, particularly in the life, death and resurrection of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. That's why America has been a light among the nations in the world.

Like the angel who appeared to the shepherds saying: "I bring you good news of great joy," we Christians have a story to tell about the blessings of honoring the true God. Telling the story can start with simply not patronizing stores that use "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas" and by reminding those who say "Happy Holidays" that "It's okay to say Merry Christmas!"

Q&A

QUESTION: *What is Incarnation, that word is often used in our church during Christmas season?*

ANSWER: INCARNATION refers to Jesus Christ coming "in the flesh". The eternal Son of God the Father assumed to Himself a complete human nature from the Virgin Mary. He was (and is) one divine Person, fully possessing from God the Father the entirety of the divine nature, and in His coming in the flesh fully possessing a human nature from the Virgin Mary. By His Incarnation, the Son forever possesses two natures in His

one Person. The Son of God, limitless in His divine nature, voluntarily and willingly accepted limitation in His humanity in which He experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue -- and ultimately, death. The Incarnation is indispensable to Christianity -- there is no Christianity without it. The Scriptures record, "...every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (I John 4:3). By His Incarnation, the Son of God redeemed human nature, a redemption made accessible to all who are joined to Him in His glorified humanity.

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

It was the evening of December 24, 1944 -- and three American soldiers, one badly wounded, had become lost

in a snow-covered Ardennes forest.

They had wandered for three days, unable to find their unit. If they didn't

find shelter soon, the one injured soldier would surely die.

These three American soldiers eventually stumbled upon a small shack in the middle of the woods. They knocked on the door.

When Elisabeth Vincken and her 12 year old son Fritz heard the knock on the door, they were struck with fear. Elisabeth cracked the door open, and was shocked to see three enemy soldiers on her doorstep.

But seeing the injured soldier, Frau Vincken had compassion on these three boys and welcomed them inside.

Frau Vincken didn't have much -- a single chicken was all the food she had left. But having compassion on the war weary soldiers she offered them all she had.

As the chicken was roasting in the oven, there was another unexpected knock on the door. Her son went to open the door, thinking there were more American soldiers who were lost.

But this time, the four soldiers standing outside the cottage were not American -- they were German!

The punishment for harboring enemy soldiers was death.

Elisabeth, fearing for her life, pushed past Fritz and stepped outside.

The four German soldiers ex-

plained that they were lost and hungry, and asked if they could spend Christmas Eve in her home.

Elisabeth told them they were welcome to share what little food she had, but warned that she had other "guests." The German soldiers sternly asked if they were Americans.

Frau Vincken nodded. "Es ist Heiligabend und hier wird nicht geschossen," she said. "It is the Holy Night and there will be no shooting here."

She told the German soldiers to leave their weapons outside and then invited them into the cabin. The tension in the air was thick as the German and American soldiers stared at each other.

But what happened next is truly a Christmas miracle.

One of the German soldiers, a former medical student, noticed the badly injured American soldier. The German had compassion on his enemy and offered to tend his wounds.

That simple act of kindness broke the tension. The American soldiers began to strike up a polite conversation using what little German they knew.

Frau Vincken finished preparing supper and motioned for everyone to sit around the table. As they said grace, the exhausted and forlorn soldiers forgot all about the war -- if only

for a moment. Several of the soldiers -- both American and German -- had tears in their eyes as they ate their humble Christmas dinner.

That evening, these bitter enemies declared an informal truce as the spirit of Christmas filled Frau Vincken's tiny shack.

The next morning, the German soldiers provided directions to the

American front lines -- and even gave the Americans a compass. They shook hands, thanked Frau Vincken for her hospitality, and went their separate ways.

With carnage all around them, the Spirit of Christmas proved to be a more powerful force than the hatred of war.

OUR CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations and best wishes to **Alexandra Hartman**, along with her parents Jason and Rebecca, on the occasion of her Initiation into the flock of Jesus Christ (Baptism, Chrismation

and Eucharist) during the 10:30 Divine Liturgy. Alexandra, we welcome you into our Parish Family and pray that God may grant you many Happy and Blessed years. Mnohaya Leeta!

PARISH MEMBERSHIP AND EXPECTATIONS

What then does it mean to be a parishioner? What are the expectations?

As a result of my baptism, in practicing my Christian discipleship, I am expected as a registered member of my parish to:

- regularly attend and participate in the Sunday Divine Liturgy, together with my family;
- regularly participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church;
- develop and practice an ongoing personal/family prayer life;

- witness to the teachings of the Church by the manner of my living life;
- practice stewardship of my time, talent and treasure in service to the mission of the Church;
- acknowledge, as a registered member, that I am to be a participant in serving the mission of the parish rather than being only a spectator; and
- realize the necessary and ongoing importance of love, generosity, faith and family.

‘TIS THE SEASON TO SAY THANKS!

The Church is decorated for Christmas 2023. Everyone loves how we decorate the Iconostas, the Altar, the windows and the manger; our Church is so beautiful! The trees were “fluffed” along with the ribbons. All empty boxes and bins have been returned to the basement.

We thank everyone who turned out to lend a helping hand in this tradition of decorating our Church on December 3rd and December 6th.

It is not hard work, but takes time, approximately 55-60-man hours to set up the Christmas decorations, from start to finish. Some Parishioners worked from 1 to 2 hours, and others worked 6-7 hours to get the job accomplished.

When everything is labeled correctly, it makes it easier for next year. 15 parishioners helped out this year, along with Dino and Duane (bringing the decorations from the Church basement/school).

Enjoy the decorations this year. It took two days and hopefully we will continue the tradition in 2024. (With enough of volunteers) Yes, we are all getting older, so we look to the younger people to help us out. The decorations will be up until the end of January 2024. Taking the decorations down, is so much easier and volunteers will be needed. Info. will be listed in future bulletins.

HELP NEEDED

As everyone knows, and as is the case for most parishes, our financial situation is not the best. Also, the interior of our church should be cleaned more frequently. We really cannot afford to hire someone to do this job.

A possible solution: A group of volunteer parishioners who would be willing to donate some time and effort once a month. Men, women, teenagers, children, anyone who could dust, vacuum, etc. We would divide and

assign the different tasks and locations, depending upon everyone’s ability and within a little time each month, get our church interior into a more presentable condition. We have vacuums but had held ones to do the cushions would be a good idea.

Saturday morning seems to be the best time to accomplish this. If enough parishioners are willing, we could schedule the first cleaning before Christmas on **Saturday, December**

16th, starting at 10:30 and then once a month (the 3rd Saturday) to follow. If you are willing to help keep our church

beautiful, please contact the rectory to sign up.

ANDREW'S PENCE

The Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) has decided to hold a collection, called Andrew's Pence, to support faithful of UGCC abroad where there is no permanent ecclesiastical structure.

More than 100 years ago Ukrainians started to leave their native land in search of a better life, material welfare, and freedom. Many settled on another continent, where church buildings of the UGCC are not everywhere, so that the

faithful could not attend services in their native Church. Wishing to provide all faithful of the UGCC with spiritual care, the bishops call upon all to support the faithful of the UGCC abroad in prayer and financially, collecting the so-called Andrew's Pence.

According to the Protocol of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, the "Andrew's Pence" collection is to be taken in all parishes each year in the month of December.

2024 CHURCH CALENDARS

The 2024 Church Calendars are available in back of the Church. The

Calendars are free, but any donations will be appreciated.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA FUNDRAISER

Our Parish will, once again, be hosting a Christmas Poinsettia Sale. We will be taking orders for the 6½" potted poinsettias from Jerry's For All Seasons until December 6th. They are being sold

for \$12 each and will be delivered on December 20th. Order forms may be found in the church vestibule. Please take a few and distribute them to your friends and neighbors.

COLLECTION PROCESSING TEAM...

The Collection Processing Team for the month of December 2023 is Team

#4: Ron Barkofsky, Steve & Jeannie Cucura.

Sunday Collection for Dececeember 2 & 3, 2023: \$

Ss. Cyril & Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church

135 River St., Olyphant, PA 18447-1435

Telephone: 570-291-4451 Fax: 570-489-6918



Web Site: stcyrils.weconnect.com

E-Mail: sscyrilandmethodius@comcast.net

Rev. Nestor Iwasiw, Pastor

Faith, Cleansing and Gratitude

Once, as Jesus was passing through Samaria on His way to Jerusalem, ten lepers met Him. They stood afar off and cried: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" Jesus saw them and said: "Go, show yourselves to the priest." So in this case He did not touch them. Instead, He tested their faith to see whether they would obey and go to the priests to get a certificate of healing even before they had been healed. They obeyed and were healed.

And one of them returned and with a loud voice glorified God and fell at His feet, giving Him thanks. He was a Samaritan. And Jesus said: "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Were there not any found to give glory to God except this for-

eigner?" And Jesus said to him: "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." The Samaritans accepted Christ as the Messiah and became Christians, while the Jews rejected Him.

The Fathers of the Church see a lesson in this for us. The ten lepers signify mankind. We are all leprous, but only one in ten give thanks to God for the salvation He has brought to us. In the same way, only some of the seed sown by God (in the Parable of the Sower) brings forth good fruit. We can all be cleansed by Him, but if we do not return to Him in gratitude and to glorify Him, we cannot be saved.