



# St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church

Sunday, December 23, 2018

**The Most Reverend Metropolitan  
JOSEPH**, *Primate Antiochian Orthodox  
Christian Archdiocese of North America.*

**The Right Reverend Bishop  
ANTHONY**, *Auxiliary Bishop*  
**V.Rev. Fr. John Alassaf, Pastor**  
**(330) 907-5811**

**[yohanna-1965@hotmail.com](mailto:yohanna-1965@hotmail.com)**

*Every Sunday:  
Matins 9:30 AM*

*Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM*

**St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church**  
**3204 Ridgewood Rd., Akron OH 44333**  
**Ph: 330-666-7116/Fax: 330-666-8292**  
**[mail@stgeorgeakron.com](mailto:mail@stgeorgeakron.com)**

Rev. Protodeacon Joseph Harb

Rev. Deacon James Reale

Sub-deacons: Sam Snyder, & Samer Zawahri

Church School Director: Julia Shaheen,

Kh. Corinne Mahshie & Jan Kattouf

Parish News Coordinator:

Kh. Rania Alassaf (330)-907-9151

Choir Director: Kim Shama Hanna

Youth Director: Dr. Bill Shaheen

Web Master: Jessica Zuder

Arabic Chanter: Tanios Tabanji

TLC Catering: Joe Catalano

(330)-607-4360 or [joe@tlccateringinc.com](mailto:joe@tlccateringinc.com)

**Greeter:** Monged Zawahri

**Epistle Reader:** Gary Salhany

**Acolytes:**

Spencer Kiehl

Julian Scalera

Stefaan Alnemr

Nezar Shakaki

Adam Eid

**Please open the book at page 92 to follow the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.**

**CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST" / "HE IS AND EVER SHALL BE"**

**THE COMMUNION PRAYER**

I believe, O Lord, and I confess, that thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who didst come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I believe that this is truly Thine own immaculate Body, and that this is truly Thine own precious Blood. Wherefore, I pray Thee, have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance; and make me worthy to partake without condemnation of Thine immaculate Mysteries, unto remission of my sins unto life everlasting. Amen. Of Thy Mystic Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies, neither will I give Thee a kiss as did Judas; but like the thief, will I confess Thee; Remember me; O Lord in Thy Kingdom. Neither unto judgment nor unto condemnation, be my partaking of Thy Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto the healing of soul and body.

### **Holy Bread Of Oblation for Today's Divine Liturgy is offered by:**

- The Reale and Mahshie Families for the health of Sam & Sandy Mahshie and the Mahshie families. & in memory of Very Rev. Fr. Louis Mahshie, Sam & Olga Mahshie, Louis & Minerva Mary Reale, Joe & Tony Zeppetello, Jimmy Marlow, Laura & Shane Gantos, Louise Mahshie, Don Conan, Addie Mahshie, Chick Abdo, and Alex Abdo
- The Alice Elias Families for the health of their families, Alexander Noecker, and Baby Boy Boyert . & in memory of Norman N. Elias.
- Micheline Debs for the health of her family & in memory of Shaker Debs.
- Atef & Teresa Haddad and Family
- Olga Yogmour
- Walid & Victoria Qaqish Family

### **Holy Remembrances are offered for the health of:**

Christian Simon, Margaux Yerian, Frank & Gladys Chirakos, Edmund & Geri Farris, Dawn Shaheen, Wafiga Zawahri Family, Karen Horattas, Rosemary Mclaughlin, John & Joyce Simon, Sophia Massouh, David Pilversack, Hnayneh Jabbour, Don Jones, Bonnie Dallas, Alexandra Eid, Afaf Halasa, Sandy Mahshie, Bryan Caley, Lamia Harb, Jordan Zawahri , Oliver Devia & Pierre Nader.

### **(Quiet prayer at the altar) Holy Remembrances at the Table of Oblation for the health of**

Samir Bakhos, Giovanni Albanna, David Welling, Shaun & Kathy Curley, Micheline Debs, Rose Farah, Jim & Susan Hanna, Fadia Albanna, Elie Eid, Deacon Joe Harb Family, Helen Dadas, Freda Corbin, Mary Smolinski, George & Georgette Zabaneh Family, Paul Megois, Richard Morrow, Marsha Lindsay, Tony Jaber, Celia Kulmala, Sophia Britton, Kristen Sage, David Pilversack, Elie Cherfan, Daisy Salem, Jihan & Hamodeh Albanna, , Regina Salloum, Madeleine Khoueiry, Kelsey Thompson,, Bob & Flo Hallowell, Susan Bogunovich, ohn Bourjaily, Mildred Halamay, Norma Kakish, Botros Kerro, Elie Sherfan, John Mashni, Helen Zimmerman, Sadie Kannam, Marie Saidy, Carl Moore, Habouba Rahbani, Greg Kattouf, Wagdi Anton, Antoine Aramouni, Gerald Hanna, Jackie Wilson, Vincent & Eleanor Alexander, Antoinette Jabbour, , Isaac & Gamalat Gaid, Ghassan Ashkar, Jackie Shama, Larry Kobbs, Dr. Richard Esper, Jordan Miller, Bob & Flo Howell, Bentley Licitiri, Kathy Velikoff, Jan Kattouf, Neda Zawahri Serhan, David Aramouni, , Patty Sue Jones, Inyas Markarian, Violet Carey, Patricia Hanna.

### **Holy Remembrances are offered for the Repose of the Souls of:**

Nick Shaheen , George Ostich, Norman Elias Sr, Anne Sayre, William Moore, Kh. Theodora Mary Kobbs, Gloria Hackim, Carmine DiGrande, Nicholas Stevens & the Newly departed June Denious and Atty. George Mallo.

## **RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE FIVE**

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

## **ENTRANCE HYMN**

Come, let us worship, and fall down before Christ. Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

## **APOLYTIKION OF THE FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY IN TONE FOUR**

Be thou ready, Bethlehem, Eden hath opened unto all. Ephratha, prepare thyself, for now, behold, the Tree of Life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the holy Virgin. Her womb hath proved a true spiritual Paradise, wherein the divine and saving Tree is found, and as we eat thereof we shall all live, and shall not die as did Adam. For Christ is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforetime.

## **APOLYTIKION OF SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY IN TONE TWO**

Great are the accomplishments of faith; for the three holy youths rejoiced in the fountain of flames as though at waters of rest. And the Prophet Daniel appeared a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. Wherefore, by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.

## **TROPARION OF ST. GEORGE**

As deliverer of captives and defender of the poor, healer of the infirm, champion of kings, victorious Great Martyr George, intercede with Christ our God for our soul's salvation.

## **KONTAKION OF PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY IN TONE THREE**

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God.

## ***Acme Community Cash Back August 10, thru December 30, 2018***

Earn 5% on Acme Fresh Market Store Brands

*They will only accept Acme Fresh Market Store Brands.*

A container will be on the candle stand or give to Mary Lou

**SAVE YOUR ACME RECEIPTS AND HELP RAISE MONEY FOR THE  
ST. GEORGE CAMP SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

***St. George Christmas Cards are sent out***

***Please support the Teen SOYO!***

***Donation \$10.00***

***Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all!***



## THE EPISTLE

(For the Sunday before the Nativity)

*Blessed are Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers.*

*For Thou art justified in all that Thou hast done for us.*

### **The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (11:9-10, 32-40)**

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. **Amen**

## THE GOSPEL

*(For the Sunday before the Nativity: “The Genealogy”)*

### **The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (1:1-25)**

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the

father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, Who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ were fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call His Name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel” (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called His Name Jesus. **(Glory to Thee O Lord, Glory to Thee)**

### **NOTIFICATIONS...**

- \* Please make sure to return Parish Council Election Ballots by Dec. 30<sup>th</sup>
- \* 2019 Ecclesiastical Calendars have arrived and are located on the candle stand.
- \* The offering envelopes boxes for the year 2019 are available in Alphabetical order for the parishioners in the lobby. **If you haven't been assigned an envelope box and you would like to have one, please contact Fr. John or the office at 330-666-7116.**

## CALENDAR

TODAY Sun., Dec., 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Sunday before the Nativity</b></li> <li>● Ladies Meeting after Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>
Mon., Dec., 24 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Christmas Eve Service</b> - Matins @ 6:00 PM - Divine Liturgy @ 7:00 PM</li> </ul>
Tues., Dec., 25 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL! Christ is born! Glorify him!</b></li> <li>● Church Office Closed</li> </ul>
Mon., Dec., 31 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New Year's Eve Party 7 PM-1 AM (check flyer on church bulletin board)</li> </ul>
Tues., Jan., 1 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!</b> Church Office Closed</li> </ul>
Sun., Jan., 6 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST</b> The Blessing of the Waters following Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>
Jan., 18 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>SAVE THE DATE:</b> 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Midwest Basketball Tournament @ St. George, Canton (check flyer on church bulletin board)</li> </ul>

## DONATIONS

### Building Fund:

\$1000	Janice Kakish in memory of Zahi Kakish Sr.
\$500	Ted & Joann Mallo in memory of Atty. George Mallo
\$500	Joanna Mallo in memory of Atty. George Mallo
\$100	Khalil & Mariah Samara in memory of William Moore

### Camp Fund:

\$100	Khalil & Mariah Samara in memory of Nick Shaheen
\$100	Martha George in memory of Nich Shaheen & Kh. Theodora Mary Kobbs

### Choir Fund:

\$200	Cynthia Shama in memory of Charlie Sturm & Atty. A.E Shama
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### Sunday School (Camp) Fund:

\$500	Joanna Mallo in memory of atty. George Mallo
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### Chancery Fund:

\$100	Jehada & Debi Asfoura
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## NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY!

Join **TLC Catering, Inc.** at **St. George Family Centre**

Tickets are \$50 per person. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Church Camp Fund. Contact the church office at 330-666-7116 or [mail@stgeorgeakron.com](mailto:mail@stgeorgeakron.com) to make reservations.

For more information check flyer on the church bulletin board.



### OUR THANKS TO:

- **THE LADIES SOCIETY** for working hard to make the Christmas Bake Sale a big success for another year and for the Christmas flowers for decorating the church.
  - **THE ZAWAHRI FAMILIES** for hosting a lovely, successful Building Fund Luncheon and for serving delicious food for all.
- Many thanks for all who supported these events.

**May God Continue to bless you all!**



### MEMORY ETERNAL

+**Atty. George Mallo** is survived by his beloved wife of 35 years, Joanna (Cerrone); siblings, John, Teresa and Michael; his brother Larry's son, Ryan; and his very special family who gave him great joy in life: John Jr.; Laurel and her children, Alexandra and Vincent; Joe and his daughter, Danielle; Tom and Petra and their daughter, Ella. George was a life-long member of Akron St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, and offered his service as legal advisor. He was named after his grandfather, George Mallo, who was one of the church founders.

**May His memory be eternal.**

+**June Denious'** memory are her loving husband Robert, sons Robert and Richard; daughter Janine; grandchildren Cory, Brandon, Jessica, Chandler, Alexis, and Noah; sister Cheryl L. Owen; brother Atty. Eugene (Terry) Elias ; sister-in-law Jo Ann Elias; and nieces and nephews Jay, Sam, Lyndell, Jon, Chris, Ty, Lisa, Todd, Shawn, John, Karrie, Zach, Nick, and

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His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTHONY



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

Diocese of Toledo and  
The Midwest

## ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

Dear Father and Esteemed Members of the Parish Council,

As you heard at the Parish Life Conference this past June, a new Midwest Diocese Chancery was purchased and His Grace Bishop Anthony moved in this past August. The Chancery sits in a charming neighborhood in Toledo, Ohio and we are happy to share the news that much progress has been made to turn a lovely, older family home into a fully functional and beautiful Diocesan Chancery. Our Diocesan Cathedral of St. George, led by Father Michael Shaheen and Mr. John Ellis, Chairman of the Chancery Committee, have worked hard to complete some initial renovations with existing funds. They have also developed plans for the rest of the needed renovations, as well as its full decoration and furnishing, which have been approved by our Diocesan Council. These plans include modest quarters appropriate to the dignity of both our Metropolitan when he visits and our Diocesan Bishop, as well as all those who will succeed him in coming generations. The Chancery also includes an office, a reception area for welcoming official visitors to the Diocese, meeting space and a Chapel. The Chancery is much more than a home for any particular Bishop. It is *our* home, the home of *our* Diocese.

The Archdiocese has paid the bulk of the cost for the purchase of the Chancery and will fund the annual expenses and upkeep. Now, it is not only our Diocese's responsibility, but our *privilege* to raise the funds needed to make the plans mentioned above a reality. Our Diocesan Council has discussed a variety of methods to raise the necessary funds, but has settled on one simple method: appealing to you, our steadfast Clergy and Faithful, to come together in support of our Diocesan home.

The total budgeted cost for the renovations and furnishing is approximately \$250,000. This is a large sum. In the past, we would assess each church something like the following schedule:

\$10,000 from our large parishes (10)	\$100,000
\$ 5,000 from our middle sized parishes (25)	\$125,000
\$ 2,500 from our small parishes (11)	\$ 27,500
\$ 1,000 from our mission parishes (6)	\$ 6,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$258,000</b>

Instead, we believe a grassroots effort lead by the parishes would yield these results or better, so let's see what we can do together, parish by parish. There are more than 50 parishes in our Diocese, *so together*, this is very achievable.

Some parishes may choose to take up collections or hold fundraisers while others may seek donations from individuals or from the parish's general fund. Still others will use all of the above methods. No matter which way your parish chooses to be supportive, we will be appreciative of your enthusiastic effort to complete this important project in the life of our Diocese.

*"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)*

Though we are spreading out the appeal over two years to make this effort easier, recognize that we will only do the work and purchase the furnishings, as the money is available. In other words, the sooner the better...we will be thrilled for any money that will be sent in advance of two years. Therefore, we ask all parishes do the following:

1. By your November Parish Council meeting, identify a dollar amount you plan to send (see below) over a two-year period.
2. Estimate what you will be able to send by March 31, 2019.
3. Fill out the attached form and return with any amount you are able as a first installment in November 2018.

We stand ready with answers to any questions you may have so please do not hesitate to contact us. May God bless our efforts as we take this next step in the growth of our Diocese.

Yours in His Service,



Mrs. Cindy Karos  
Vice-Chair, Diocesan Council  
[ckaros@visi.com](mailto:ckaros@visi.com)



V. Rev. Michael Nasser  
Secretary, Diocesan Council  
[frmichael@stnicholasgr.com](mailto:frmichael@stnicholasgr.com)

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**MIDWEST CHANCERY FUND**

PARISH NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY, ST/PR: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount we intend to raise: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount included in this first installment: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount intended by March 2019: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form with checks payable to "Midwest Diocese" to:  
Mrs. Lynn Simon, Diocesan Treasurer  
7289 Old Lantern Dr. SE  
Caledonia, MI 49316

*"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)*

Midwest Diocesan Chancery  
5549 Ginger Tree  
Toledo, OH 43623

**MIDWEST DIOCESE CHANCERY  
FUNDRAISER**

If you would like to contribute, please make checks payable to **St. George  
Antiochian Orthodox Church** with a note in the memo area

**"Midwest Diocese Chancery"**

**A COPY OF THE DONORS NAMES AND AMOUNT WILL BE SENT TO HIS  
GRACE BISHOP ANTHONY**

**Thank you and May God Bless you always**

## SERMON ON SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS



### **In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit!**

The Sunday before Christmas is known to the Orthodox as the Sunday of the Holy Genealogy. On this day the Church commemorates the ancestors of Christ from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed. Christ's full humanity meant not just that he possessed a human nature but that he had blood relatives, and that he came from a long family line. One of the shortcomings of modern culture is the tendency to leave the past behind and focus on the now. This has resulted in people feeling rootless and incomplete.

In Orthodoxy we remember our ancestors because they are part of us. To remember our family and our family roots is to affirm our humanity; likewise, to overlook our family connections is to diminish our humanity. To remember is an act of love and faithfulness. We all came from somewhere. Our family heritage is a source of blessing and sometimes a source of pain. As Christians we have both a biological and a spiritual family lineage. Salvation in Christ extends to both family lines. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 3:14-15:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named....Here Paul is looking to the future when all of humanity and creation become one family under the fatherhood of God.

The Matins Service, which precedes the Divine Liturgy, has been likened to Orthodoxy's equivalent of Sunday School for adults. It is liturgical in structure being made up of fixed prayers and hymns. It also contains didactic teachings. The passages below are taken from the Synaxarion of the Matins Service.

On this day, the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, we have been enjoined by our holy and God-bearing Fathers to make commemoration of all them that from the beginning of time have been well-pleasing unto God, from Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, according to genealogy, as Luke the Evangelist hath recounted historically; and likewise for the Prophets and Prophetesses, especially of Daniel the Prophet and the three holy youths.

It is also known as the Sunday of the Holy Genealogy. We remember the aforementioned names, those in the Old Testament who were related to Christ by blood, and those who spoke of His Birth as a man. In the Divine Liturgy, we shall read of Jesus Christ's lineage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. In this way, the Church shows us that Christ truly became a man, taking on human nature. He was not a ghost, an apparition, a myth, a distant imagined god, or the abstract god of philosophers; such a god does not have a family tree. Our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He has flesh and blood, human ancestors—many of whom sinned greatly, but like David, also repented greatly. Yet, all of these righteous ones in every age had been well-pleasing to God because they loved Him. By taking on human nature, the Son of God became like us in all ways, in flesh and blood, in mind and soul, and in heart and will. He differed from us in only one way: He could not sin. Since we know that Christ's human nature remained sinless, He is also fully divine, and He shows us the way in which we can avoid sin, and so improve and transform our human nature. By their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.

The first paragraph teaches us that it is part of the Orthodox Tradition to remember our ancestors in the faith. The Sunday before Christmas is an appropriate time to remember the ancestors of Christ. It provides us an opportunity to reflect on the way God works mysteriously and sometimes obscurely in our family history. It also reminds to have faith that God is working redemptively in human history. Sin might be present but God's grace even more so (Romans 5:15).

The second paragraph affirms Jesus' blood relatives. The second paragraph asserts that Jesus was a real historical person and not some mythical figure. This means that Christian theology is ultimately grounded in the empirical events of the birth of Jesus Christ, his life and ministry, his crucifixion under Pilate and his third day resurrection. The truth claims of Orthodox Christianity rests ultimately on a historical chain of testimony pointing to the historical events of Christ's life and teaching.

Today's Sunday in the remembrance of the Holy Fathers who from generation to generation believed that the Lord would come into the world to save it. May this example strengthen us in our Christian life, in our spiritual weakness, which we sometimes cannot cure in ourselves. May this ecclesial remembrance strengthen us in our faith, and let us not weaken in our prayers, but be unrelenting before the Lord. And then the Lord will grant each of us and our Fatherland for our fidelity, devotion, and patience, that great gift that we call the grace of the Holy Spirit. I greet all of you, my dears, with the coming Feast of the Nativity of Christ. May God grant you all strength, fulfillment of faith, and hope. **Amen. Fr. John**