



**ST. PETER & ST. PAUL
UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
105 CLIFTON AVE
ANSONIA, CT 06401
Rectory Phone 203-734-3895
Church Hall 203-732-2414
Fr. Ed Cell 413-218-6404**

*Leaders of the Apostles and
teachers of the world, pray to the
Master of all to grant peace to the
world and great mercy to our souls.*



December 17, 2023

Web Site: www.stspucc.org

Very Rev. Archpriest Edward Canon Young, Pastor

Sunday of the Holy Ancestors. The Holy Prophet Daniel, the Three Holy Youths Ananiah (Ananias), Azariah (Azarias) and Mishael (Misael) (6th century BC) Nativity Fast.

Epistle Colossians 3: 4-11 Gospel: **Luke 14: 16-24** Tone Sheet

DIVINE LITURGY SCHEDULE

WEEKDAYS: MONDAY–FRIDAY 10:00AM

SUNDAY: 8:30 AM (Ukr.) & 10:00 AM (Eng.)

Confessions are heard before each Divine Liturgy: Sunday 8:00AM to 8:30AM and 9:30AM until 10:00AM

Religious Education – Saturday 10:00AM – 11:00AM

Sunday After 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy
Call Audrey Sokol 203-924-1184 for more information.

Preservation – Please use the form in church vestibule, mail it to the church or bring it to Michael Wysowski, Jr. or Fr. Edward Young or Robert Jaskilka.

Address or Name Change/New Phone Number

– Please update your records. See Michael Wysowski, Jr. to update this info.
Returned checks are subject to a **\$35.00 fee per check.**

Bulletin Notices – Notices for the bulletin must be **in writing** by Wednesday @6PM to be included in that week's bulletin.

Parish Council meets every 3rd Wednesday of every month @7:15pm in the church hall.

Rectory Office Hours - Thursday 1:00 to 3:00 PM or by Appointment on other days

******Please Note ******

Mass Offerings, Sorokousty

Mother's Day, Father's Day

Checks must be made out to the Fr. Edward Young **not the Church** ! Thank You...

Baptism Arrangement for baptism is to be made personally at the Parish Office. Please call rectory for an appointment.

Marriage – Arrangements for marriage are to be made at least **6 months prior** to the Wedding date. Please call rectory for an appointment.

Sick Calls – To arrange for Sacraments for the elderly and sick at home, please call Parish Office Fr. Young at 203-734-3895, ***Please advise the rectory of any hospitalization.***

In your Estate planning – Remember Sts. Peter & Paul Church in your will.

Stewardship - "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). All Catholics, should give generous support—time, money, prayers, and personal service according to their circumstances—to parish and diocesan programs and to the universal Church

Special Share in the Eucharist *– Bread & Wine

offered for a week, month, or year. Donations: one week - \$20.00
Donors/intentions will be listed.

Michael Wysowski, Jr or Fr. Edward Young

Eternal Light *– offered to light for a week \$10.00.

Michael Wysowski, Jr. or Fr. Edward Young

Virgin Mary's Lamp and Sacred Heart Lamp* also available for offering!

Offered to light for a week is 10.00, each. Michael Wysowski, Jr. or Fr. Edward Young

All start on Monday to Sunday!

****Offering must be made when dates
are reserved on a first come first served basis !!!!***

A Welcome to St. Peter and St. Paul Parish to all who are worshipping with us today. If you are over twenty-one years of age and have not yet registered, have moved or will be moving, or have a new telephone number, please fill out the form below. Each household must be registered at St. Peter and St. Paul and every adult receives a set of stewardship envelopes. Registration also entails an annual dues to the parish. If a parishioner is not registered, it is difficult for church authorities to issue him or her a sponsor certificate, reference, or any other certification.

Name _____ Phone# _____ Email _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

A Prayer to Say before Holy Supper by the Father of the Family:

Troparion, Tone 4: Your Nativity, O Christ our God,* made the light of knowledge dawn on the world:* through it, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star* to worship You, the Sun of Righteousness,* and to know that You, the Dawn from on the high.* Glory to You, O Lord. O God Father, Son and Holy Spirit, We bow our heads as we honor your presence at this table. We keep in mind that Jesus is the cause of our rejoicing in this season. We will celebrate the arrival of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in a cave in Bethlehem. We thank you for each family member who has come to share this Holy Supper. We thank You for these traditional foods that has been provided for us to share at this meal. Lord, help us find and enjoy *all* of the blessings that you have placed in this Christmas Eve. Amen.






Christ Is Born! Let us Glorify Him! ХРИСТОС РАЖДАЄТЬСЯ! СЛАВІТЕ ЙОГО!

Bread and Wine Offering - None Offered

12/16	Saturday	10: 00 AM	+Helen Jenks
12/17	Sunday	8:30AM 10:00AM	Pro Populo (For All Parishioners) - За Всіх Парафіян +Helen & Domenick Logaidice req. by Linda Fusco
12/18	Monday		No Liturgy
12/19	Tuesday	10:00 AM	+Mary Elizabeth Koalchic Garahan req. by M/M Richard Koalchic
12/20	Wednesday		No Liturgy
12/21	Thursday		No Liturgy
12/22	Friday	9:00 AM	Royal Hour
12/23	Saturday	10:00	Saturday before Christmas +Joseph Jenks
12/24	Sunday	8:30 AM 10:00 AM 9:00 PM 10:00 PM	Sunday December 24, Sunday of the Fathers and Christmas Eve is a day of Abstinence from Meat "PIST BEZ M'IASA" 8:30 AM Pro Populo (For All Parishioners) - За Всіх Парафіян 10:00 AM +Julie Richerson req. by M/M John Zanowiak Christmas Services 9:00 PM Grand Compline Service "Povecheriye" 10:00 PM CHRISTMAS DAY LITURGY For Holy-Day Obligation Liturgy Pro Populo (For All Parishioners) - За Всіх Парафіян Liturgy of Saint Basil

Monday December 25, The Great Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ Holy-Day Obligation

10:00 A.M. Christmas Day Liturgy Pro Populo (For Parishioners) - За Всіх Парафіян

ETERNAL LIGHT		<i>In loving memory +Taras Kolodii by Roma Kardash & Family</i>
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY LAMP		<i>In loving memory of +Leonila Gebuza by Lisa & Micheal Warycha & Family</i>
SACRED HEART of JESUS LAMP		<i>None Offered</i>

BREAD & WINE OFFERING RESERVED DATES	ETERNAL LIGHT LAMP OFFERING RESERVED DATES	BLESSED VIRGIN MARY LAMP OFFERING RESERVED DATES	SACRED HEART OF JESUS LAMP OFFERING RESERVED DATES
None Offered	12/25/23-12/31/23 1/1/24-1/7/24 1/8/24-1/14/23 1/15/24-1/21/24 1/22/24-1/28/24 6/17/24-6/23/24	12/25/23-12/31/23 1/1/24-1/7/24 1/8/24-1/14/24 1/15/24-1/21/24 1/22/24-1/28/24 2/12/24-2/18/24 3/4/23-3/10/23 4/8/24-4/15/24 5/6/24-5/12/24	12/25/23-12/31/23 1/8/24-1/14/24 1/15/24-1/21/24 1/22/24-1/28/24



PRAYER FOR OUR NATION Lord, we pray for peace and unity in our nation today. Keep us in peace, O Christ our God, under the protection of your Holy Cross; save us from our enemies, visible and invisible, that we may glorify You with thanksgiving, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. We pray that You would inspire this nation to be a nation under God. Give us your hope. Give us your peace. Amen The Light of God ~ surround us. The Love of God ~ enfold us.

The Power of God ~ protect us. The Presence of God ~ watch over us.

The Mind of God ~ Guide us. The Law of God ~ direct us.

Wherever we are God ~ be our strength.

PRAY FOR PEACE IN UKRAINE AND THE WORLD: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL, SPREAD YOUR OMOPHOR ~ WE IMPORE YOUR PROTECTION OVER UKRAINE AND BEG THAT YOU INTERCEDE WITH OUR LORD TO GRANT PEACE.



PRAYER FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF UKRAINE IN TIME OF INVASION: O Lord God of powers, and God of our salvation, O God, who alone work wonders: look down with mercy and compassion on Your humble servants, and out of love for mankind hearken and

have mercy on us and on the land of Ukraine. For, behold, enemies have once more gathered together, in order to cause division and enmity. But You who know all things, understand that they have risen up righteously, and that it will be impossible to oppose their multitudes unless You show us Your help. Therefore, we who are sinful and unworthy pray unto You in repentance and with tears: Help us, O God, our Savior, and deliver the land of Ukraine for the sake of the glory of Your Name, that the enemy may not to say: "Their God has forsaken them, and there is none to deliver and save them." But let every nation understand that You are our God, and we Your people are always protected under Your dominion.



VOLUNTEER – By definition, it is a person who freely offers to do something or undertakes a task; To volunteer means to freely offer up your time and service to help, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it to serve another or the community. When was last time you Have ever asked yourselves "How do I serve a parish Community" ? As parishioners, we look to come together at a meal, at the parish festival, and other happenings.... Remember these events do not just 'happen'. These events are not the responsibility of the pastor! For these events to take place, it requires the talents of the member of the parish; it requires each of you to come forward and VOLUNTEER your time and talents. You don't need an

invitation, you need to come forward and offer to help freely, inquire where you can serve. For a parish to be active, vibrant, it needs the help from those it serves! It is time to look around, to become aware of where you and your time and your talents can serve the needs of the parish. It is time to step forward and become involved in the life of the parish. Don't look for the other person to step up, this is your Church. If you want to see parish events happen, you need to be involved. Remember each of you are the CHURCH, each responsible for the full life of the parish. Let us come together to grow in hospitality, grow in community and service. Be a leader and come forward. Be that "Gift" !!

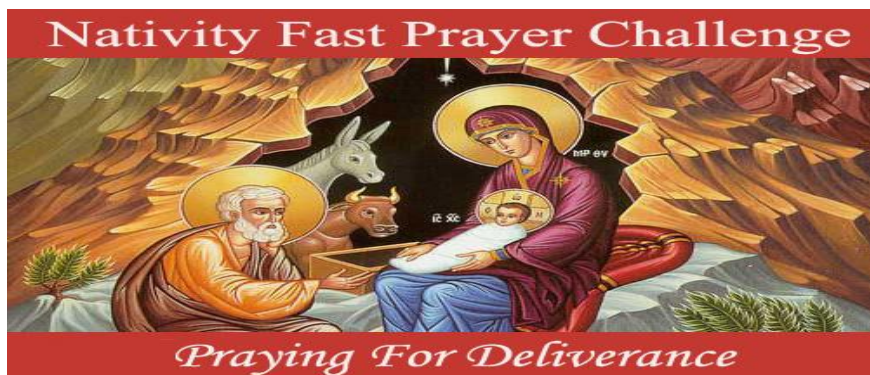
PHILIP FAST FOOD PANTRY PROJECT BEGAN NOVEMBER 15

"Do you fast? Prove it by doing good works. If you see someone in need, take pity on them... For a true fast, you cannot fast only with your mouth. You must fast with your eye, your ear, your feet, your hands, and all parts of your body." ~ St. John Chrysostom

As we prepare for Christmas, we are encouraged during the Philip Fast/Pilypivka, to do good works through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

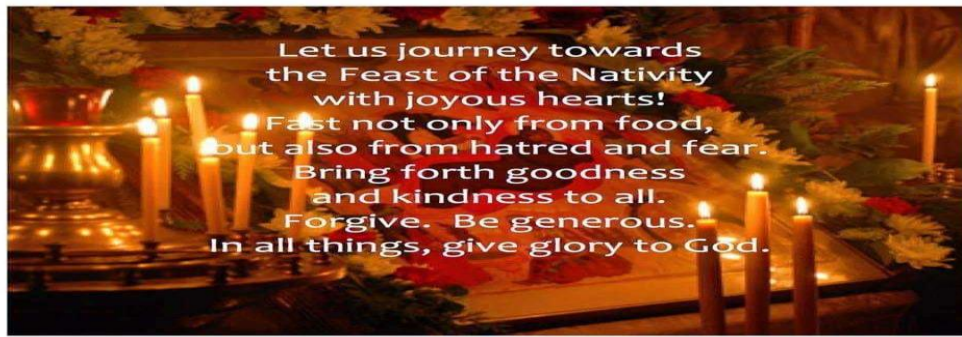
As we approach the Philip Fast in preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, let our focus be on the needy as we fast. All of this emphasis on fasting during this period is to prepare our hearts for the coming of Our Savior. Beginning on **November 19 through December 17**, the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Ukrainian Catholic Parish will sponsor a **"Philip Fast Food Pantry**

Project", collecting non-perishable food staples to be donated to the Saint Francis Pantry at Assumption Parish, Ansonia, CT **Daily giving list of food needed to donate.** Needed non-perishable items are ~ Cereal, oatmeal, rice, beans, canned meats, tuna, canned vegetables and fruits, hearty soups, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, tomato sauce, peanut butter, grape jelly.



My Journey Through the *2023* Nativity Fast

Start ↓	Nov. 29 Welcome someone to play with you today who may need a friend.	Nov.30 St. Andrew Day! He was the first one called! Be quick to come when you are called today!	Dec. 1 Sweep the porch and sidewalks today for mom and dad, then for a neighbor!	Dec. 2 Do an extra chore but don't tell anyone...be a secret angel.	Dec. 3 Offer to help someone with a difficult job today.
Nov. 15 Discuss how your family will observe this fast for the next 40 days.	Nov. 28 Smile at someone who looks sad today and cheer them up!	Dec 15 Make Christmas cards for priests, monks or nuns, and those in nursing homes today.	Dec. 14 Set the table without being asked.	Dec. 13 St. Lucy Day! Make sweet rolls and deliver them to someone	Dec. 4 Force branches on the feast of St. Barbara! Blooms by Christmas mean good luck!
Nov. 16 St. Matthew Begin to collect spare change for the poor at Christmas.	Nov. 27 Learn a new prayer today...one you don't have memorized yet.	Dec. 16 Make everybody's bed today as a gift.	Dec. 17 Read a Christmas story to your little sister or brother	Dec. 12 Say a special prayer for all of the unborn babies today!	Dec. 5 Leave your shoe out for St. Nicholas to fill tonight!
Nov. 17 Say a prayer for someone who is sad today, then send them a card to cheer them up.	Nov. 26 Visit someone who is lonely today and give them a hug.	Dec. 19 Do an extra chore but don't tell anyone...be a secret angel.	Dec. 18 Say a special prayer for someone who is sad today.	Dec 11 Practice your Christmas Carols so you'll be ready at Christmas! Put on a show!	Dec. 6 St. Nicholas Day! Do a secret good deed in his honor.
Nov. 18 Do an extra chore but don't tell anyone...be a secret angel.	Nov. 25 Play in the snow and make a snowman for everyone to see!	Dec. 20 St. Ignatius of Antioch Bake some bread for a neighbor!	Dec.21 Clean and Decorate your room for Christmas	Dec 10 Call Grandma or Grandpa (or an older friend) and say hello today.	Dec. 7 St. Ambrose Bee extra sweet today...sweet as honey!
Nov. 19 Set the table without being asked, maybe make pretty place cards!	Nov. 24 Offer to make someone a cup of tea or cocoa and sit and talk to them for a while.	Dec 23 Do you know what to say when someone says, Christ is Born? Glorify him!	Dec. 22 Practice looking for the first star so you can do it at Holy Supper	Dec. 9 Read a Bible story before bed tonight that you haven't read before.	Dec 8 Conception of St. Anna Say an extra prayer to welcome the Theotokos!
Nov. 20 Clean your room for the holidays, then decorate!	Nov. 23 Thanksgiving Day Wash the dishes or empty the dishwasher today without being asked.	Dec. 24 Help set the table for Holy Supper. Sing Christmas Carols!	<p>Material found on ByzAlum.com may be reprinted for personal use. Not to be used for commercial purposes. All rights reserved © ByzAlum.com 2018.</p>		
Nov. 21 Entrance of the Theotokos Review the prayer to the Theotokos and say it 10 times for priests.	Nov. 22 Practice and recite the prayers before and after meals today!	Christ Is Born!			



Christ Is Born! Let us Glorify Him! Christ Comes Down from Heaven! Let Us Go Out To Meet Him! Christ Lives on Earth! Let us Exalt in Joy!

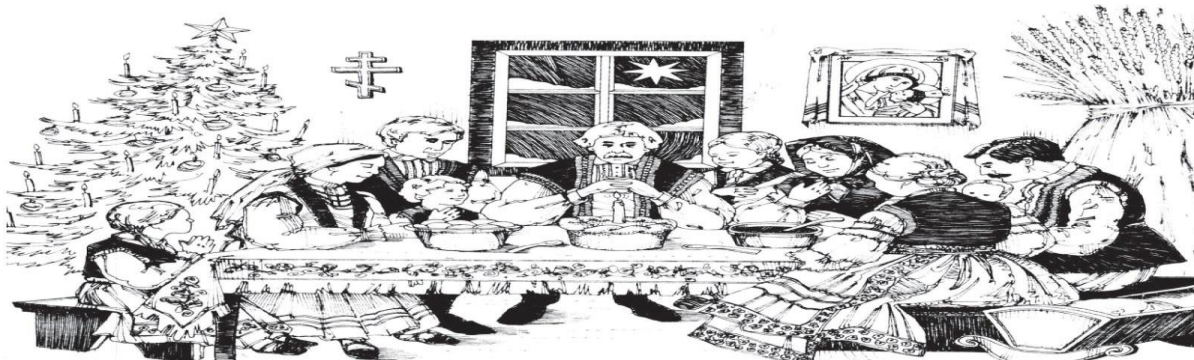
Father Edward prays that He who was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Christ our God, Bless each and every one in our Parish Community through His Blessed Gifts of Heavenly Peace and God's Mercy!




Merry Christmas and a Wonderful New Year to All!



Бажаємо усім нашим Парафіянам Веселих Свят та Щасливого Нового Року! Нехай наші серця горять любов'ю та надією в Милостивого Вифлеємського

ДИТЯТКА, які народжується задля нашого спасіння і благає нас бути свідками Його Миру й Благоволення! **Благослови нас, О Божий Сину!**

PRAYER FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF UKRAINE IN TIME OF INVASION: O Lord God of powers, and God of our salvation, O God, who alone work wonders: look down with mercy and compassion on Your humble servants, and out of love for mankind hearken and have mercy on us and on the land of Ukraine. For, behold, enemies have once more gathered together, in order to cause division and enmity. But You who know all things, understand that they have risen up righteously, and that it will be impossible to oppose their multitudes unless You show us Your help. Therefore, we who are sinful and unworthy pray unto You in repentance and with tears: Help us, O God, our Savior, and deliver the land of Ukraine for the sake of the glory of Your Name, that the enemy may not to say: “*Their God has forsaken them, and there is none to deliver and save them.*” But let every nation understand that You are our God, and we Your people are always protected under Your dominion.



<p>For your AD info, message Call 203-734-3895 or YoungE8073@aol.com</p>	<p>WAKELEE MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME John S. Zaleski Director Virginia K. Hylwa Administrator</p> <p>203.734.1490 <i>Parishioners Serving Parishioners Over 90 Yrs.</i></p> 	<p>For your AD info, message Call 203-734-3895 or YoungE8073@aol.com</p>  <p>JOIN SUMA F.C.U. & Save Big! Support Locally! Bank Near & Far!</p> <p>For all your financial needs - we are just a call, click or a text away 914.220.4900 memberservice@sumafcu.org or visit our New Haven or Stamford branches. We are open!</p>  <p>www.sumafcu.org</p>
<p>Support those who advertise in our bulletin!</p>		

	<p><u>2024 ENVELOPES</u> The envelopes for 2024 are in the church hall. Please pick them up; they will not be mailed. Any friends/relatives may also pick up their envelopes for delivery</p>
	<p>ALSO, 2024 CALENDARS ARE HERE – ONE PER FAMILY AS LONG AS THEY LAST. THE CALENDARS WERE GENEROUSLY DONATED BY JOHN ZALESKI OF WAKELEE MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME THANK YOU AND MNOHAYA LITA!</p>

2023 STAMFORD CHARITIES DIOCESE APPEAL

St. Peter & St Paul Holy Name Society Donated \$1,520.00 and the Church Treasury made up the balance of \$1,885.00 to meet the Chancery Goal of \$7,5000.



Schedule of Christmas Season 2023 -2024 Divine Services, Ansonia, CT

Sunday, December 17, Sunday of the Forefathers

8:30 AM Divine Liturgy

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Friday, December 22, Friday before Christmas

9:00 AM Royal Hour 6th

Saturday, December 23, Saturday before Christmas

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Sunday December 24, Sunday of the Fathers and *Christmas Eve is a day of Abstinence from Meat "PIST BEZ M'IASA"*

8:30 AM Divine Liturgy

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Christmas Services

9:00 PM Grand Compline Service "Povecheriye"

10:00 PM CHRISTMAS DAY LITURGY For Holy-Day Obligation Liturgy *Pro Populo (For All Parishioners) - За Всіх Парафій Liturgy of Saint Basil*

Monday December 25, *The Great Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ Holy-Day Obligation*

10:00 A.M. Christmas Day Liturgy *Pro Populo (For Parishioners) - За Всіх Парафій*

Tuesday, December 26, Synaxis of the Mother of God

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, December 27, Feast of Saint Stephen the First Martyr

10:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy

Sunday , December 31, 2023 New Year's Eve Feast of Saint Melanie

8:30 AM Divine Liturgy

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Monday , January 1, 2024 Sunday before Theophany Feast of the Circumcision & *Feast of Saint Basil*

10:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy

Friday, January 5, 2024 the Vigil of Theophany No Meat Permitted "PIST BEZ M'IASA"

6:00 P.M. Divine Liturgy and the Greater Blessing of Water

Saturday, January 6, 2024 Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord. Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ Holy Day Obligation Fast Free

10:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy

Sunday, January 7, 2024 Sunday after Theophany

8:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy

10:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy

Following Divine Liturgy our Parish Christmas Dinner



ANNUAL PARISH COMMUNITY PROSPHORA- HOLY SUPPER

Sunday, 7th January 2024

This is a wonderful tradition of our parish. It will take place following the 10:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy. As in the past, we ask all attending to bring a dish to pass. Suggested "meatless pot luck" dishes such as: Borscht & Mushroom Soup; Halushky (noodles & sauerkraut); Herring; crab cake or fish fillets; Macaroni & cheese; Pyrohy-Pierogi; Mushrooms sauce; Stewed fruits; other traditional items from Holy Supper and dessert items. Please assistance with this family event of our parish, the contact persons are:

Jaroslawa Sembrat at 203-929-4813 or **Father Edward Young** 413-218-6404. All members of the parish should be present at this event.

Yevshan Choir will sing the 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy January 7, 2024 Following Liturgy, we will sing a short "mini-concert" of 6 pieces in the Church Before Iconostasis.

Yevshan Choir will join the Parish Christmas Dinner and sing during the our Christmas Common Meal.

Week 6: Sunday of the Holy Fathers

1. Read the material on this Week's Feast (see below) slowly and meditatively to yourself. Recall that we remember the Holy Prophets and Prophetesses as they spoke God's Word in the world and prophesied the coming of the Messiah.
2. Read and reflect on the following Bible passages Story of the Call of David: I Samuel 16:1-13, noting what kind of person does God chose, and 3 of the Prophecies of the Messiah's Birth (from Royal Hours for Nativity: Micah 5:2-4; Isaiah 7:10-14; Isaiah 9:6-7.) (see below)
3. Pray/sing the Tropar and Kondak of the Week (see below) with your family.
4. Read the material on the Feast aloud, slowly and meditatively with your family.
5. Discuss with your family who God chooses and the Prophecies about Christ.
6. Ask your family the following questions:
 - Does God like better those who are biggest, strongest?
 - How did Samuel show David was chosen King?
 - In Greek and Hebrew, what is that word for "chosen King?"
 - What happens at Baptisms?
 - In the Micah reading: Was a big city chosen? How will people live?
 - In Isaiah 7: What is the Sign? What does Immanuel mean?
 - In Isaiah 9: What will save the World? How will He rule and over what?
8. Conclude with the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast.

Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant, from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.

Tropar - Tone 2

Great are the achievements of faith!

**In the fountain of flames, the Three Holy Youths rejoiced as by
the water of rest, and the prophet Daniel was revealed
shepherding lions like sheep.**

Through their intercession, O Christ God, save our souls!

Kondak – Tone 6

**Armed by the Being that defies description,
You defied the man-made idol, O thrice blesses youth.**

**In the midst of the unbearable
flames you stood and cried out to**

God:

**"In Your mercy o gracious One, hasten and come to
our aid," for You can do whatever You will.**

Sunday of the Holy Fathers

The Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord is known as the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. On this day, the Church commemorates all those who were well pleasing to God from all

ages — from Adam to St. Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos. The holy prophets and prophetesses are also remembered today, especially the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths.

Micah 5:2-4 : Bethlehem Ephrath, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah. But the LORD will choose one of your people to rule the nation - someone whose family goes back to ancient times. The LORD will abandon Israel only until this ruler is born, and the rest of his family returns to Israel. Like a shepherd taking care of his sheep, this ruler will lead and care for his people by the power and glorious name of the LORD his God. His people will live securely, and the whole earth will know his true greatness,

Isaiah 7:10-14: Again, the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6-7: A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be Wonderful Advisor and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace. His power will never end; peace will last forever. He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong. He will always rule with honesty and justice. The LORD All-Powerful will make certain that all of this is done.

TWENTY NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS

EPISTLE - COLOSSIANS 3: 4 - 11 GOSPEL - LUKE 14: 16 – 24 TONE 4

Today is the Sunday of the Forefathers, which falls on the nearest Sunday between December 11th and the 17th. It is the day on which we remember all the righteous figures from the Old Testament, whose lives and character revealed, in a prophetic manner, something of the mystery of the Coming of the Christ.

The hymns today sing of the honored fathers of all age's past: Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, Enoch and Abraham, Melchizedek and Job, Isaac, and the faithful Jacob; as well as the daughters of old: Hannah, Judith, Deborah, Huldah, Jaël and Esther, Sarah, Miriam the sister of Moses, Rachel, Rebecca and Ruth the exceedingly wise.

In every case, the lives of these righteous men and women are a manifestation of the plan of God to save the world – His Divine Oikonomia (The Greek Work Oikonomia to build up from the Foundation. 1 Peter 2:7) It is a story of God's outreach to the human family, and His desire to include everyone in His Household and in His Kingdom

That's why today's Gospel reading is so important. There is something so very forceful about the command of the Οικοδεσπότης, the Master of the Estate, when he learns from his servant that the summons to his Banquet has been declined by those invited guests. He commands:

"Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame."

And when his servant replies, "My Lord, what you commanded has been done, but there is still room," the Householder becomes more urgent and commands:

"Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled."

This insistence and real pressure is not a negative emotion for God; rather, it is a sign of His love for every single human being in this world of ours. Everyone – the billions of souls whom we will never know, God wants them all at His Table in the Kingdom. When we hear of *"the poor and maimed and blind and lame,"* we should understand these conditions as being those of the soul and heart.

There are people with a great deal of money in their pockets, but who are paupers in their souls. There are people who have been so hurt by the world and the others in their lives, that they cannot make their way to be loving, decent, and good. There are those who are blind to the truth about themselves, and therefore they cannot see the needs of others. And there are still others who have self-inflicted wounds of selfishness and greed that make it hard for them to reach out to others.

But these are the very people that God wants, because He wants us all.

This Christmas, let us be like the Holy Forefathers and Foremothers whom we celebrate this day. They

sought to bring others to God, and we can do the same. With a simple loving word, with a phone call to someone we have ignored, with an invitation that is overdue. Even as we continue to protect ourselves and others in this time of pandemic, we spread the message of God's inclusive and embracing love in the world, in the little world that each of us inhabits daily.

May the Lord Who is Coming to be Born in Bethlehem of Judea grant unto us a blessed Feast of His Holy Nativity, and grant unto us a safe, prosperous, and healthy New Year.

CATECHISM - CHRIST OUR PASCHA - TODAY'S EPISTLE / GOSPEL LESSON :

GOD'S LOVE: Page 59, Section 159; Page 62, Section 167

DECEMBER 23 - SATURDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 24 - SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS - CHRISTMAS EVE



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Christmas is one of the most cherished celebrations that the Ukrainian people celebrate. Christmas celebrations begin on Christmas Eve, December 24 (as per the Gregorian Calendar), which is a day of vigilance, prayer and fasting. The entire family is involved in the preparation of the traditional Christmas Eve Supper (or Sviata Vechera – literally “Holy Supper”). When the first star in the eastern sky appears, reminiscent of the star of Bethlehem, it marks the beginning of the ancient and memorable rituals. Holy Supper is ritualized in a number of ways, full of symbols that highlight its religious purpose or simply link it to pre-Christian peasant traditions. A candle in the window invites strangers and those without others to celebrate with to come in. Hay is spread on the floor and under the tablecloth, to remind us of that God came into the world in a manger. The entire family gathers by the table and the head of the family leads in prayer – usually the singing of the Nativity theme. After this he greets the family with the traditional Christmas salutation: “Christ is Born!”. The family responds, “Let us glorify Him!”. Everyone then sits down to partake of the Holy Supper, which consists of twelve meatless dishes. The Holy Supper on Christmas Eve is a culmination of rich traditions, symbolic dishes, and heartfelt customs that embody the spirit of Ukrainian Christmas. It is a time of joy, reflection, and hospitality, inviting both family and strangers to share in the festive celebration of the birth of Christ. As we delve into the depths of these cherished practices, we witness the enduring cultural and spiritual significance that makes Ukrainian Christmas a truly special and meaningful occasion. Later in the evening the whole family goes to church for the service of Great Compline with Litiya.

This is the very moving and unforgettable service where one hears sung majestically, “God is with us.” At about midnight, the solemn Divine Liturgy is celebrated, the culmination of the entire Christmas celebration.

Христос Родився! Christ is Born!