

THE MESSENGER

ST. DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

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MISSION STATEMENT

To bring all children, youth and young adults closer to Christ and His Church through religious education, fellowship and various other events on a parish and national level.



CHRIST AND THE WORLD

Christmas Encyclical of His Eminence Metropolitan Sotirios of Toronto (Canada)

Does the modern world need Christ? Do the people living in society today properly understand and appreciate the blessings received from the Christian faith, and the benefits derived from Christian teachings? Let us take a look at some of the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the benefits that are extended to us through them.

In the Roman Empire, there were no human rights for women, children and slaves. They were regarded as objects and possessions to be used by their owners, and the man who owned them could do as he pleased with them. It was Christ who first taught that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3.28).

Today's Western society, which has been nurtured through the centuries in the Christian faith and tradition, gives much emphasis to the importance of human rights. How does this teaching of Christ compare with the fanaticism and the terrorism that is taught in certain other religions? Christ replaced the Old Testament teaching of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", with the new teaching to "love one another" and to "love your enemies".

When the Judaeans were ready to stone the unfortunate woman who was accused of adultery, Christ said: "let the person who is without sin throw the first stone." Those who were ready to stone her were stopped in their tracks. They threw down their stones, and left embarrassed and in disgrace. However, this punishment of stoning is still practiced today by other faiths for such types of alleged sin, even if it is not the fault of the victim.

Christ taught repentance and forgiveness. Other religions still practice the barbaric act of cutting a small child's hand off, even if they happen to steal food when they were hungry and had nothing to eat. Their teachers who preach this kind of barbarity do not even give them the chance to repent and to correct themselves. Christ taught the existence of the eternal Kingdom of God and spiritual life after death. In the afterlife, divine justice will be rendered. There will also be forgiveness for the person who repented, even if they did so at the last minute, and who asked for forgiveness from God, just as the thief on the cross did. Others teach: "let us eat and drink now, for tomorrow we die." (Con't on page 3)

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Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!





Celebrating the Real "Santa Claus"

St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra

Throughout Church history, the Orthodox faithful have shown a genuine love and respect for certain influential Saints. Their feastdays are always celebrated with great joy and solemnity. One of the most well-known and beloved Saints for the people of Greece was the "Wonderworker" Archbishop of Myra in Lycia. This was a man who was present at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea and helped Orthodoxy survive the heresy of Arianism. He is a Saint that has millions of Churches dedicated to him.

St. Nicholas lived during the time when Saint Constantine the Great ruled the Byzantine Empire. From a young age, St. Nicholas wanted to spend his time dedicated to God. But it was not until he went on his own religious journey to the holy city of Jerusalem where he found a quiet place and dedicated himself to prayer. Although his desire was to serve the Lord in this way, God would lead him back to his homeland to serve as its Shepherd, its Archbishop.

During his tenure as Archbishop, he was known to all the faithful as a man expressing great mercy, providing necessities to the poor and less fortunate people. St. Nicholas' life would not only remain within the confines of Myra, though; he would play a very important part in a Council which saw Bishops come together from all across the Christian World.



In the year 325 in Nicaea (present-day Turkey), St. Nicholas joined the First Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church that included 318 Fathers. This Council was the first time that the Church's Bishops met to discuss various issues, including the heresy of Arius. St. Nicholas loved Truth so much, he lashed out at Arius in a moment of frustration during the Council meeting. Since it was against the Church for any clergymen to act in such a manner against another person, the bishops of the Council were uncertain of the punishment that would be given to St. Nicholas. However, our Lord and our Lady Theotokos appeared to the bishops during the night, telling them that they should not punish St. Nicholas because his behavior towards Arius was out of his great devotion to the Orthodox faith. He passed away at a venerable age, fulfilling his call as Archbishop and a faithful servant of God.

St. Nicholas is usually referred to as "the Wonderworker" (or θαυματουργός) because of the many miracles that are attributed to him. He is considered the Patron Saint of children, merchants, sailors, scholars, and anyone who travels by sea.

St. Nicholas Made a Difference! You Can Too!

St. Nicholas was a teacher of self-discipline and dedicated himself to prayer. He showed everyone that he had a passion for seeking the Truth. He spread the word of God by putting others before him and saving the innocent from death. We can be like him if we show this Christ-like love that St. Nicholas also displayed throughout his life. May His example be one for us to follow, to be closer to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Άγιε του Θεού, πρόσβευε υπέρ ημών!

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER—ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN (AD 306-373)

The feast day of your birth resembles You, Lord, because it brings joy to all humanity. Old people and infants alike enjoy your day. Your day is celebrated from generation to generation. Kings and emperors may pass away, and the festivals to commemorate them soon lapse. But your festival will be remembered until the end of time. Your day is a means and a pledge of peace. At Your birth heaven and earth were reconciled. Since you came from heaven to earth on that day, You forgave our sins. You gave us so many gifts on the day of your birth: A treasure chest of spiritual medicines for the sick; Spiritual light for the blind; The cup of salvation for the thirsty; The bread of life for the hungry. In the winter when trees are bare, You give us the most succulent spiritual fruit. In the frost when the earth is barren, You bring new hope to our souls. In December when seeds are hidden in the soil, The staff of life springs forth from the virgin womb.



CHRIST AND THE WORLD (CON'T FROM PAGE 1)

Christ is the Messiah, the One who is both God and man. He is the only Redeemer and Saviour of the world. He is our only true God. By His Divine teachings and example, He taught the Truth and transformed the world. It is in reference to Him that historians mark time and speak of human history as "before Christ" and "after Christ". Unfortunately, some persons who were educated and spiritually nurtured in the Christian faith wish to overturn and distort these teachings of Christ. They go so far as to appropriate and teach as their own the very teachings of Christ. They present themselves as god. They do not respect or believe in Christ, nor His teachings. Without perhaps realizing it, they will bring back to society the former teaching of "an eye for an eye", and encourage acts of revenge and promote division and strife. This will lead to the practices of the stoning of women; the lack of respect for human rights; the dismemberment of the hands of small children, even for minor offences. They will turn back any progress that has been made in society, so that the law of the jungle will again prevail.

All that I have mentioned above proves beyond any doubt that the world today has a greater need for Christ and His love. There was never a time where the presence of Christ in our midst is so necessary. Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, comes to be born in each of us, and I ask all of us to accept Him in our souls and in our hearts. My prayer is that He brings peace and tranquility to our minds and our souls. May He ease human suffering and pain through out the world for every person. May He cease injustice and terrorism. May He bring the hope of forgiveness and unending joy in our spiritual life after death. May He always impart to each of us His love and His forgiveness. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Blessed and Happy New Year, with Christ reigning in our souls and in our hearts.

With fatherly love and best wishes in the New-Born Christ,

+ METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP SOTIRIOS OF TORONTO, Head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Canada

LEARN MORE ONLINE ABOUT THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS!



Christmas is one of the greatest feasts of the Orthodox Church. Throughout the ages, Church Fathers have written a great deal about it. Today, a lot of these texts are available online, so we can learn more about the Great Feast and how it teaches us about who Christ is and what His birth means for us all. Here's just a selection:

- The [Listen-Learn-Share Special](#) from the Archdiocese of America has the Biblical story, the hymns of the feast, brochures and sermons about the feast, along with *Iconograms* (Orthodox e-cards).
- [The Preacher's Institute](#) has a special on Christmas, with various homilies from the Fathers of the Church.
- The site [OrthodoxWiki](#) has an article dedicated to the Nativity of Christ.
- iEcclesia Orthodox Podcast also has various episodes on the Great Feast of the Nativity in its [Archives](#).
- [Sermons](#) & [info](#) about the fast and Feast are found on the site of the *Orthodox Church in America* (OCA.org).
- Finally, visit our Sunday School's website — [LivingOrthodoxy.com](#) — for information about the Feast!

Where the Good News Is!

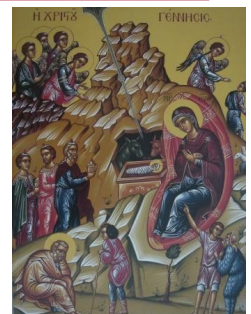


Livingorthodoxy

WHAT DOES ST. PAUL SAY... ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

Brethren, when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir of God through Christ.

~ Galatians 4:4-7 (Epistle Reading for Christmas)





*St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
Religious Education Newsletter*

30 Thorncliffe Park Drive
Toronto, ON M4H 1H8

Tel: 416-425-2485

Fax: 416-425-2954

st.demetrios@greekcommunity.org

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[STDEMETRIOS.TORONTO](mailto:STDEMETRIOS.TORONTO@GMAIL.COM)

[@GMAIL.COM](mailto:STDEMETRIOS.TORONTO@GMAIL.COM)

The third Greek Orthodox Church in Toronto, St. Demetrios Church was founded in 1962. Since then, our Church has been the spiritual home of thousands of Orthodox faithful from Toronto and vicinity. Our Church is a constituent member of the Greek Community of Toronto [www.greekcommunity.org] and under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto (Canada) [www.gometropolis.org]. The Religious Education programs have been attended by many children, youth and young adults. Our tireless staff works to promote the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Parish Priest

Religious Education Director

Young Adult League Leaders

Parish Council President

Philoptochos President

Greek Bible Study

Re-Catechism

(English Orthodox
Discussion Group)

Rev. Fr. Konstantinos Pavlidis

Mr. Basile Polidoulis

Mrs. Vicki Vokas, Mr. Niko Sotiropoulos

Mr. Argyrios Haros

Mrs. Theodora Koutsoubou

Mr. Basile Polidoulis

Mrs. Fotini Kapsalis

Mr. John Kapsalis

Mr. Chrysostom Makropoulos

Mr. Tim Prattas

LET'S CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS TOGETHER AT ST. DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH!

As Christmas approaches, we are all called to show love to God through participating in services and helping our neighbours in need. At our Church, the following services and activities are being held to usher in the Christmas season:

1. Dec. 1st-23rd: Food, Toy and Clothing Drive for families in need
2. Thurs. Dec. 1st, 8th, 15th: Greek Bible Study sessions
3. Sunday, Dec. 4th: Sunday School Christmas Pageant (after the Divine Liturgy-)
4. Friday, Dec. 9th: Sunday School Divine Liturgy (7:00—8:45 p.m.)
5. Sunday, Dec. 11th: Christmas Youth Retreat (during the Divine Liturgy)
6. Saturday, Dec. 24th: Morning — Service of the Royal Hours (9:00—10:30 a.m.)
Evening — Christmas Eve Divine Liturgy (7:00—10:00 p.m.)
7. Sunday, Dec. 25th: Christmas Matins & Divine Liturgy (9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon)



*Καλα και
Ευλογημένα
Χριστουγεννα!*

*May the peace and hope of
Christ's birth
be with you now and in the days ahead...*