Happy New Year!
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Birthdays in January
10 – Elaine Lyszczarz
11 – Olga Prawlocki
11 – Alexandra Gale
13 – David Keblish
13 – Virginia Shaftic
13 – Charlotte Gale
15 – Stanley Danielak
18 – Anna Clark
22 – Cindy Sue Sobolowski
23 – Nicholas Keblish Jr
24 – Louisa Gale
24 – Randy Hula
24 – Nellie Hrynda
24 – Dale Richards
29 – Nikita Zaitseva

Memory Eternal
1 - Charles Pysz (1977)
3 - Anna Ostasz (2002)
6 - Steve E Yaworski (2003)
7 - Tekla Anthony (1970)
7 - Despo Jeffries (1978)
11 - Elizabeth Spytko (1996)
13 - Andrew Hrobuchak (1994)
14 - Nicholas Kravec Sr (2007)
14 - Martha Steciak (2008)
17 - Walter Jovorosky Sr.
18 - John Burdick (1978)
19 - Mary Nichols (2007)
20 - Stephania Eskoff (2000)
21 - John Kravec (1975)
22 - Emelia Mildred Mamrosch (1989)
22 - Steven Hrynda (1999)
23 - Philip Homiack (1976)
24 - Tekla Leve (2009)
25 - Steven Slenska (1996)
25 - Dorothy Coley
25 - Peter Mezick
25 - Sarah Eskoff
25 - Stella Eskoff
26 - Timofei Fedorensko (1981)
27 - Chester Ptasznik (1998)
27 - Mary Sterzin (2009)
29 - Anna Marochko (1986)
30 - Peter Bawolak (1979)
31 - Tillie Leve

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY
Jan 3 Father Deacon Demetrios and Matushka Anastasia Richards
Jan 10 John Elnicky and Lauren Jedlan
Jan 17 Margaret and Nick Keblish
Jan 24 Martha Mamrosch and Family
Jan 31 Debie and David Chlus
Feb 7 Norma and John Stehnach
Feb 14 Anne Gale and Family
Feb 21 Walt Tirenin and Steve Leve
Feb 28 Ed and MaryAnne Mamrosch

The December Newsletter was donated in memory of the Prawlocki, Gromadzky, Stehnach and Jovorosky Families and in honor of Nicolle, Aaron, Ashley and Avery Buttino, by Sonia Buttino.
We apologize for the tardiness of this announcement.
CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (1983)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. In a night similar to this one, a winter night, in a manger was born the Son of God Who has come into the world to bring us a new dimension of life, to proclaim to us God's truth about Himself and God's truth about men, and not only proclaim it, but to make it possible for us to participate in this mystery of communion between God and man. He has brought us a word about God which is a word of absolute truth, and has proclaimed the greatness of man in terms that are greater than all the imagination, which man had in the course of centuries, all the dreams: man called to be united to God as God united Himself to men in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Man, in the words of Saint Ireneus of Lyon, called in his perfection and fulfilment, to be the glory, the shining, the resplendence of God on earth. We are called to proclaim to the whole earth this good news that God is one of us, and that we are the sons and daughters of our eternal Father. But we must proclaim the Gospel in its integrity, in an unadulterated manner because it is God speaking, God proclaiming the truth, and there is no adjustment which can be acceptable to the Gospel.

The wise men who came to the manger, came with all the wisdom of the earth, all the knowledge that was then possessed, but they could recognise in the Babe of Bethlehem the incarnated Son of God and worship Him as their King and their God because they were prepared to allow divine wisdom to supersede all wisdom of the earth. It is not in vain that saint Paul has said that compared to wisdom Divine human wisdom is nothing but folly, a poor thing compared to the greatness of the mind, and heart, and wisdom of God. And we must have the determination to open ourselves to the wisdom of God, be prepared to judge all things of the earth from the point of view of the living God. Our thoughts, our feelings, our ways fall under the divine judgment. My ways are not your ways, and My thoughts are not your thoughts; My ways are so much above yours as My thoughts are greater than yours, — says the Lord.

But it is not only wisdom, it is also simplicity and singleness of heart that can both see God, recognise Him and follow Him with infinite daring. The shepherds came because the ir hearts were open, because they were prepared to understand that there are things greater than anything they can imagine, anything they could dream of. And dreams of men came true: God became man. And He calls us to be a vanguard of His Kingdom. He sends us into this world to proclaim His truth, pure, unstained, He sends us into this world to live in such a way that anyone meeting a Christian, looking into his eyes, into his life or meeting a Christian community should recognise that these people are men and women partaking already of the mystery of eternal life. Short of this we betray our calling. We must each of us and all of us be a revelation to the world of things eternal.

We must learn from Saint Paul both the daring and the wholeness, the integrity of our Christian ways. He says to us: Be follower of me as I am of Christ... He was a persecutor, an unbeliever, and having met Christ face to face, the risen Christ, Who he knew had been killed on Calvary, murdered by his own people, he chose for Him and all his life was changed. Persecution, danger, beatings, rejection became his lot in order for him to be Christ's only; and to be Christ's only as he puts it means that all life is nothing but Christ, what he stands for, what he teaches, what he lived for, what he died for.

And death has no terrors for us, because nothing can deprive us of eternal life and the loss of temporal life is of no account to Saint Paul. He says: To die is not to divest myself of temporary life but to cloth myself with eternity... He longs to be reunited with Christ, Whom he has persecuted on earth,
and for Whom, for Whose name, for Whose sake he lives and preaches and warns us, into us not to subtract or add anything to God's own message about man and about God. And he calls us in the face of our longing for eternity to accept to live as long as it is necessary, as tragically as necessary for others to discover life eternal, the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of love, of that love which Christ has revealed into us, love to the end, love crucified and love risen. Glory be to our Lord, to our God, to our Saviour for ever and ever. Amen.

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**Discourse On the Nativity of Christ by Saint Gregory Thaumaturgogos, Bishop of Neo-Caesarea**

Brethren, we behold now a great and wondrous mystery. Shepherds with cries of joy come forth as messengers to the sons of mankind, not on their hilly pastures with their flocks conversing and not in the field with their sheep frolicking, but rather in the city of David Bethlehem spiritual songs exclaiming. In the highest sing Angels, proclaiming hymns Archangelic; the heavenly Cherubim and Seraphim sing out praises to the glory of God: "Holy, Holy, Holy..." Together all do celebrate this joyous feast, beholding God upon the earth, and mankind of earth amidst the heavens. By Divine providence the far distant are uplifted to the highest, and the highest, through the love of God for mankind, have bent down to the far distant, wherefore the MostHigh, through His humility, "is exalted through humility." On this day of great festivity Bethlehem hath become like unto heaven, taking place amidst the glittering stars are Angels singing glory, and taking the place of the visible sun -- is the indefinable and immeasurable Sun of Truth, having made all things that do exist. But who would dare investigate so great a mystery? "Wherein God doth wish it, therein the order of nature is overturned", and laws cannot impede. And so, of that which was impossible for mankind to undertake, God did aspire and did descend, making for the salvation of mankind, since in the will of God this is life for all mankind.

On the present joyous day God hath come to be born; on this great day of arrival God is become That Which He was not: being God, He hath become Man, so to speak as though removed from Divinity (though His Divine Nature be not divested of); in being made Man, He hath remained God. Wherefore, though He grew and flourished, it however was not thus as it were by human power to attain to Divinity nor by any human ability to be made God; but rather as the Word, by miraculous sufferance, wherein He was incarnated and manifest not being transformed, not being made something other, not deprived of that Divine Nature which He possessed previously. In Judea the new King is born; but this new and wondrous nativity which pagan Gentiles have come to believe, the Jew have eschewed. The Pharisees comprehended incorrectly the Law and the prophets. That which therein was contradictory for them, they explained away mistakenly. Herod too strove to learn of this new birth, full of mystery, yet Herod did this not to reverence the new-born King, but to kill Him.

That One, Who did forsake the Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, and all the constant and luminous spirits -- He alone having come a new path, does issue forth from an inviolate of seed virginal womb. The Creator of all comes to enlighten the world, indeed not leaving His angels orphaned, and He appears also as Man, come forth from God.

And I, though I see by the NewBorn neither trumpets (nor other musical instruments), nor sword, nor bodily adornments, neither lampadas nor way-lamps, and seeing the choir of Christ composed of those humble of birth and without influence -- it doth persuade me to praise of Him. I see speechless animals and choirs of youth, as though some sort of trumpet, songfully resonant, as though taking the place of lampadas and as it were shining upon the Lord. But what shall I say about what the lampadas do light? He -- is the verymost Hope and Life Itself, He is Salvation Itself, Blessedness Itself, the focal
point of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is Himself borne as offering, so that there would in power transpire the proclamation of the heavenly Angels: "Glory to God in the Highest," and with the shepherds of Bethlehem be pronounced the joyous song: "And on earth peace, good-will to mankind!"

Born of the Father, in His Person and in His Being passionless, now in a manner dispassionate and incomprehensible He is born for us. The praeternal birth, He alone Who was born dispassionately doth know of; the present birth, is supernaturally known only by the grace of the Holy Spirit; but in both the first birth truly, and in the present birth in kenotic humbling, actually and immutably God was born from God, but He -- is also Man, having received flesh of the Virgin. In the highest of the One Father -- He is One, the Only-Begotten Son of the One Father; in kenotic humbling Unique of the unique Virgin, the Only-Begotten Son of the one Virgin... God suffereth not passions, in being born God of God; and the Virgin did not suffer corruption, since in a manner spiritual was born the Spiritual. The first birth -- is inexplicable and the second -- is insurmisiable; the first birth was without travail and the second was without impurity ... We know, Who now is born of the Virgin, and we believe, that it is He, born of the Father praeternally. But what manner of birth it was we would not hope to explain. Neither with words would I attempt to speak of this, nor in thought would I dare to approach it, since the Divine Nature is not subject to observation, nor approachable by thought, nor containable by the hapless reasoning. Needful only is to believe in the power of His works.

The laws of corporeal nature are evident: a married woman conceives and gives birth to a son in accord with the purpose of marriage; but when the Unwedded Virgin gives birth to the son miraculously, and after birth remaineth a Virgin, -- then is manifest and higher corporeal nature. We can comprehend what exists according to the laws of corporeal nature, but afront that which is beyond the laws of nature, we fall silent, not through fear, but more so through sin-wrought fallibility. We must needs fall silent, in silent stillness to reverence virtue with a worthy reverence and, not going beyond the far limits (of word), to be vouchsafed the heavenly gifts.

What to say and what shalt I proclaim? To speak more concerning the Virgin Birth-Giver? To deliberate more on the miraculously new birth? It is possible only to be astonished, in contemplating the miraculous birth, since it overturns the ordinary laws and order of nature and of things. About the wondrous works (of God) one might say in brief, that they are more wondrous than the works of nature, since in nature nothing begets itself by its own will, though there be the freedom thereof: wondrous therefore are all the works of the Lord, Who hath caused them to be. O, immaculate and inexplicable mystery! That One, Who before the very creation of the world was the Only-Begotten, Without-Compare, Simple, Incorporeal, is incarnated and descends (into the world), clothed in a perishable body, so that He be visible to all. For if He were not visible, then by what manner would He teach us to keep His precepts and how would He lead us to the invisible reality? It was for this therefore that He became openly visible, to lead forth those of the visible world to the invisible. Far more so do people reckon their eyesight as more credible a witness than mere hearsay; they trust that which they see, and doubt that which they see not. God willed to be visible in body, to resolve and dispel the doubts. He willed to be born of the Virgin, not to initiate of Her something unneeded and wherein the Virgin knew not the reasons of the matter, but rather the mystery of His birth is an immaculate act of goodness, wherein the Virgin Herself asked of Gabriel: "How can this be, in that I know not a man" -- to which She received in reply: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon Thee, and the power of the MostHigh shall overshadow Thee" (Lk 1:34-35). But in what manner did the Word, Who was God, therefore issue forth from the Virgin? This -- is an inexplicable wonder. Just as a goldsmith, having obtained the metal, makes of it a thing suitable for use, thus did Christ also: finding the Virgin immaculate both in spirit and in body, He assumed of Her a spirit-fashioned body conformable to His
The Nativity of Christ

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Newsletter, January 2016

What more to say, what shall I expound on? The new wonders do strike me with awe. The Ancient

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impairment and without diminishing of his masculine nature, so also from woman without man was
needed to bring forth a man, similar to the bringing forth of Eve, so that Adam be not extolled in that
without his means woman should bring forth woman. Therefore the Virgin without cohabitation with
man gave birth to God the Word, made Man, so that in equal measure it was by the same miracle to
bestow equal honour to both the one and the other half -- man and woman. And just as from Adam was
taken woman without his diminishing, so likewise from the Virgin was taken the body (Born of Her),
wherein also the Virgin did not undergo diminishing, and Her virginity did not suffer harm. Adam
dwelt well and unharmful, when the rib was taken from him: and so without defilement dwelt the
Virgin, when from Her was brought forth God the Word. For this sort of reason particularly the word
assumed of the Virgin Her flesh and Her (corporeal) garb, so that He be not accounted innocent of the
sin of Adam. Since man stung by sin had become a vessel and instrument of evil, Christ took upon
Himself this receptacle of sin into His Own flesh so that, the Creator having been co-united with the
body, it should thus be freed from the foulness of the enemy, and man thus be clothed in an eternal
body, which be neither perished nor destroyed for all eternity. Moreover, He that is become the God-
Man is born, not as ordinarily man is born -- He is born as God made Man, manifest of this by His
Own Divine power, since if He were born according to the general laws of nature, the Word would
seem something imperfect. Therefore, He was born of the Virgin and shone forth; therefore, having
been born, He preserved unharmed the virginal womb, so that the hitherto unheard of manner of the
Nativity should be for us a sign of great mystery.

Is Christ God? Christ is God by nature, but not by the order of nature did He become Man. Thus we
declare and in truth believe, calling to witness the seal of intact virginity: as Almighty Creator of the
womb and virginity, He chose an unshameful manner of birth and was made Man, as He did will.

On this great day, now being celebrated, God hath appeared as Man, as Pastor of the nation of
Israel, Who hath enlivened all the universe with His goodness. O dear warriors, glorious champions for
mankind, who did preach Bethlehem as a place of Theophany and the Nativity of the Son of God, who
have made known to all the world the Lord of all, lying in a manger, and did point out God contained
within a narrow cave!

And so, we now glorify joyfully a feast of the years. Just as hence the laws of feasts be new, so now
also the laws of birth be wondrous. On this great day now celebrated, of shattered chains, of Satan
shamed, of all demons to flight, the all-destroying death is replaced by life, paradise is opened to the
thief, curses be transformed into blessings, all sins forgiven and evil banished, truth is come, and they
have proclaimed tidings filled with reverence and love for God, traits pure and immaculate are
implanted, virtue is exalted upon the earth, Angels are come together with people, and people make
bold to converse with Angels. Whence and why hath all this happened? From this, that God hath
descended into the world and exalted mankind unto Heaven. There is accomplished a certain
transposition of everything: God Who is perfect hath descended to earth, though by Nature He
remaineth entirely in the Heavens, even at that time when in His wholeness He be situated upon the
earth. He was God and was made Man, not negating His Divinity: He was not made God, since He was
always such by His very Nature, but He was made flesh, so that He be visible to everything corporeal.
That One, upon Whom even the Heaven-dwellers cannot look, chose as His habitation a manger, and
when He came, all around Him became still. And for naught else did He lay in the manger, than for
this, that in giving nourishment to all, He should for Himself extract the nourishment of infants from
maternal breasts and by this to bless wedlock.

On this great day people, leaving off from their arduous and serious affairs, do come forth for the
glory of Heaven, and they learn through the gleaming of the stars, that the Lord hath descended to the
earth to save His creation. The Lord, sitting upon a swift cloud, in the flesh wilt enter into Egypt (Is 19:1), visible fleeing from Herod, on that very deed which inspires the saying by Isaiah: "On that day Israel wilt be third amidst the Egyptians" (Is 19:24).

People entered into the Cave, thinking not at all about this beforehand, and it became for them an holy temple. God entered into Egypt, in the place of the ancient sadness there to bring joy, and in the place of dark gloom to shed forth the light of salvation. The waters of the Nile had become defiled and harmful after infants perished in it with untimely death. There appeared in Egypt That One, Who upon a time turned the water into blood and Who thereafter transformed these waters into well-springs of the water of rebirth, by the grace of the Holy Spirit cleansing away sins and transgressions. Chastisement once befell the Egyptians, since in their errors they defied God. But Jesus now is come into Egypt and hath sown in it reverence for God, so that in casting off from the Egyptian soul its errors, they are made amicable unto God. The river waters concurred worthily to encompass His head, like a crown.

In order not to stretch out in length our discourse and briefly to conclude what is said, we shall ask: in what manner was the passionless Word made flesh and become visible, while dwelling immutably in His Divine Nature? But what shall I say and what declare? I see the carpenter and the manger, the Infant and the Virgin Birth-Giver, forsaken by all, weighed down by hardship and want. Behold, to what a degree of humiliation the great God hath descended. For our sakes "impoverished, Who was rich" (2 Cor 8:9): He was put into but sorry swaddling clothes -- not on a soft bed. O poverty, source of all exaltation! O destitution, revealing all treasures! He doth appear to the poor -- and the poor He maketh rich; He doth lay in an animal manger -- and by His word He sets in motion all the world. He is wrapped in tattered swaddling clothes -- and shatters the bonds of sinners having called the entire world into being by His Word alone.

What still should I say and proclaim? I see the Infant, in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger; Mary, the Virgin Mother, stands before it together with Joseph, called Her husband. He is called Her husband, and She -- his wife, in name but so and seemingly wedded, though in fact they were not spouses. she was betrothed to Joseph, but the Holy Spirit came upon Her, as about this the holy evangelist doth speak: "The Holy Spirit shalt come upon Thee, and the power of the MostHigh wilt overshadow Thee: and He to be born is Holy" (Lk 1:35) and is of the seed of Heaven. Joseph did not dare to speak in opposition, and the righteous man did not wish to reprove the Holy Virgin; he did not want to believe any suspicion of sin nor pronounce against the Holy Virgin words of slander; but the Son to be born he did not wish to acknowledge as his, since he knew, that He -- was not of him. And although he was perplexed and had doubts, Who such an Infant should be, and pondered it over -- he then had an heavenly vision, an Angel appeared to him and encouraged him with the words: Fear not, Joseph, son of David; He That shalt be born of Mary is called Holy and the Son of God; that is: the Holy Spirit shalt come upon the Immaculate Virgin, and the power of the Most High wilt overshadow Her (Mt 1:20-21; Lk 1:35). Truly He was to be born of the Virgin, preserving unharmed Her virginity. Just as the first virgin had fallen, enticed by Satan, so now Gabriel bears new tidings to the Virgin Mary, so that a virgin would give assent to be the Virgin, and to the Nativity -- by birth. Allured by temptations, Eve did once utter words of ruination; Mary, in turn, in accepting the tidings gave birth to the Incorporeal and Life-Creating Word. For the words of Eve, Adam was cast out of paradise; the Word, born of the Virgin, revealed the Cross, by which the thief entered into the paradise of Adam. Though neither the pagan Gentiles, nor the Jews, nor the high-priests would believe, that from God could be born a Son without travail and without man, this now is so and He is born in the body, capable to endure suffering, while preserving inviolate the body of the Virgin.
Thus did He manifest His Almightiness, born of the Virgin, preserving the virginity of the Virgin intact, and He was born of God with neither complication, travail, evil nor a separation of forsaking the immutable Divine Essence, born God from God. Since mankind abandoned God, in place of Him worshipping graven images of humans, God the Word thus assumed the image of man, so that in banishing error and restoring truth, He should consign to oblivion the worshipping of idols and for Himself to be accorded Divine honour, since to Him becometh all glory and honour unto ages of ages.

Amen!

When is the right time for us to start putting up Christmas decorations?

Some of us are fed up with the shopping malls which start decorating and playing Xmas muzak from Halloween (remember when it used to be ‘from after Thanksgiving’? - the good old days...). Isn’t it strange that July 4th parades are on July 4th, Labor day picnics are on Labor Day, fallen soldiers are memorialized on Memorial Day. Halloween and Thanksgiving and New Year are celebrated on those days. But big business starts in October to sell us and bombard us with Christmas. And big business ends the celebration kaboom! on December 26th. We Christians ought to be really upset about having our Holy Day destroyed by the society surrounding us, but many Christians don’t give it a thought and get sucked into ‘going with the flow’.

The Orthodox Christian answer to the question ‘When to decorate?’ is clear - Christmas Eve is the time to start decorating. In the ‘old country’ nobody would think about Christmas decorations before Christmas Eve. And the decoration for Christmas Eve was straw on the table for Holy Supper to remind us that Jesus was born in the manger. In the old country, gifts are distributed on Saint Nicholas’ day, so that Christmas is a Church holy day, and after Church, Christmas Day is a time for visiting relatives and friends. Yes, it’s true that now Christmas trees are starting to be found in the old countries, but it’s something imported from America. Christmas trees, wreaths, flowers, sweets, and decorating the house with lights are not Orthodox customs or traditions.

Our society wants to make Christmas a non-denominational event. In schools and businesses, it’s no longer proper to call it a Christmas party, rather it’s called a season party so as not to offend those who aren’t Christian. Our society is turning Christmas into a time of romance, the sounds of the season - sleigh bells and skis, and the sights of the season - the fireplace. The real sound of the season is cash registers ringing up sales to complete such extensive gift lists that they often include people we don’t even know! None of this has anything to do with the birth of our Lord.

The main theme of Christian Christmas decorations around the world seems to be light. It reminds us of the star which came and stood over the manger, it reminds us of the night sky studded with stars on the night of our Savior’s birth, it reminds us of the candle-lit room where the newborn Jesus lay, and it reminds us of light unseen by the eye, the spiritual light, the uncreated light of God, God’s own energy, which no doubt illumined the hearts and souls of all those who approached the cradle holding Him who holds all Creation in His hands. It is the light of Christ which illumines all. In England, a wreath with four candles in it is placed on the table and on each of the four Sundays of Advent one more of the candles is lit. On Christmas day, the candles are removed and the wreath is hung up as decoration. Germany supposedly originated the idea of decorating trees, especially with candles and light-catching ornaments. Trees were decorated in secret, to be revealed only on Christmas morning. In France and England a Yule log is decorated then lit on Christmas Eve and burned throughout the celebration of the feast. In Scandinavia, on Christmas morning the girls in the family wear wreaths with candles in them on their heads, and they come into the bedroom of each family member, singing Christmas songs to wake them up. Every Christian country has its Christmas celebrations, but all of them wait until Christmas.

In our country, when more and more people are turning away from Christ, where more and more followers of other gods are our neighbors, it’s increasingly important for us to decorate our homes with Christian Christmas symbols to show that Christ is the center of our lives and especially of our Christmases. In this way, we are witnesses for Christ. If you decorate your home, consider using an icon of the Nativity in the window. If
you don’t have an icon of the Nativity, perhaps you have a manger scene. For us Christians, the principal decorations should be Christian - we should avoid symbols of the season which are without religious significance: toy soldiers, snowmen, carolers, Santa and his deer and his helpers, and so on, except as bit players. Perhaps it’s not a bad idea to prepare the outside of your home early, so people see that you’re a Christian and you’re making a room ready for the Lord. Then add the other decorations inside your home on the eve of the Holy Day itself. The icon of the feast, manger scenes: then greeting cards, wreaths, flowers, bows, the tree and it’s decorations - all becomes beautiful and meaningful.

And let’s not be in a hurry to take our Christmas decorations down. Used to be people would leave decorations up at least until the priest came to bless the house. If you can’t wait to take the decorations down, at least wait through the eight-day Postfeast of Christmas.

We must never forget that fasting is the true orthodox preparation for the coming of Christ, and fasting includes prayer, repentance, doing good to others, as well as the dietary restrictions. If you are strong, and able to fast, that’s wonderful - don’t boast about it, but set a silent example for others. If you are weak and unable to fast, don’t tempt others to sin - don’t eat your forbidden foods in public and don’t invite others to share your sin with you. If you can’t follow the dietary restrictions, at least show, through your exemplary behavior, your cooperation with God’s Holy Spirit.

We should also restrain ourselves from playing Christmas music until Christmas. In Church, on the feast of Saint Nicholas, on the Sunday of the Forefathers, and during the Pre feast of Christmas we already begin to sing about the coming of Christ. There are advent carols, which are appropriate for advent. But the spirit of fasting includes the idea of keeping silence. How can you hear the herald angels announce the birth of Christ if the stereo is blasting? How can you prepare a room for Jesus and fill it with gossip, senseless chatter and criticism? Saint James’ Liturgy says, “Let all mortal flesh keep silence and stand in fear and trembling, pondering nothing earthly.”

The preparation for Christmas isn’t shopping, isn’t rich foods, isn’t carols, isn’t decorating the house, isn’t office parties, isn’t trimming a tree. The preparation for Christ coming into the world and in to YOU is now, always has been and always will be fasting, praying, doing good, and repenting. THIS is the preparation for the good things of Christ, this is the mature approach to our Christian life. If we take the time to prepare for Christ in our souls and hearts and minds, then these other things we do will have some meaning for us, and they’ll be worth doing. If we take the time to prepare for Christ in our souls and hearts and minds, then we’ll never hear again any complaint about Christmas having become big business, materialistic, false glitter, because we’ll know that that isn’t what Christmas is all about.

The important room to prepare for the Lord isn’t the house and it’s decorations, but our souls and hearts and minds and bodies, so that Jesus will find in us a worthy place to lay His head.