

## Homily on the Forefathers of Christ

St. Matthew 1:1-25

Hebrews 11:9-10,17-23,32-40

### Why genealogy? Two lessons for today: genealogy of Christ and implications for us

#### One: genealogy showed that Jesus was flesh – “Emmanuel: God with us”. He had ancestors.

- Critical/foundation Truth: Jesus is perfect God and perfect man. Two natures. One person.
- Without this truth, we have nothing – no hope of salvation, perfection, or mercy
  - It is only through this combination that the gulf between mankind and God can be bridged
  - Through it we have both the possibility of perfection AND the proof of God’s love for us
- Other religions miss this fundamental truth completely.
- Reading Matthew’s list every year reminds us that God (perfect and unfathomable) joined the human race in a very real way: he has a family tree just like we do
  - Not a perfect tree! David, Solomon. And like us there were the odd ones. This is what the real world is like. **This is the real world that gave birth to Christ and that He came to save.** The one where people make mistakes. But the one where all are offered the opportunity to recover from these and start fresh.
  - The men and women listed in the genealogy are interesting in and of themselves – most have several aspects of their lives described in the Old Testament – but the most important part of their identity is this: **“And [they] begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”** And it is only the Christ reflected back into them that makes them worthy of adoration, just as it is only the Christ reflected in them that makes any of these saints worthy of adoration. (segue to point 2)
  - The genealogy describes and reminds us of how Christ came to be with us.

#### Two: The implication of this genealogy for all of us

- Today (as on every...) we celebrate the Liturgy mostly in Ukrainian. Why?
  - Practical reasons? Not really. Not in the way most people think of it.
  - Historical reasons? Yes, of course. But what is the theology behind it? What makes it right?
  - It is a celebration of who we are and how we got here – it is our genealogy of how Christ came to be with us.
- 2000 years ago, Christ came to save his people by taking physical form. He continues to do so now through His Church.
  - He came to us, here in Woonsocket, through Sts. Andrew, Olha, Volodymyr, Anthony and Theodosius and we remind ourselves of this through these icons
  - He came to us, here in Woonsocket, through the efforts of the Orthodox hetman, Cossacks, Brotherhoods, pioneers, and martyrs who preserved the Orthodox faith in Ukraine against terrible odds.
  - He came to us here in Woonsocket through our forefathers who sought economic and religious freedom here and planted within this community a love for Christ and His Church (not perfect, if time).
- This then, is why we read the genealogy – because it reminds us of who we are. Not just as Ukrainians, but as Christians. We are all Ukrainian Orthodox because it is through Ukraine that we receive Christ.
  - 100 years from now, there may be no one here who speaks Ukrainian as their native language... but we will still celebrate our ancestry, because it is our ancestors who carried Christ to us.

May we have the strength and courage of our faith that our ancestors in the Old Testament, in Ukraine, and here in this community to had, so that we too will bring Christ to those who come after us.