

Advent/St. Phillip's Fast, 2009

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is tragic that the days surrounding the celebration of the Birth of Christ are marked with so much worry and stress; that the days commemorating the coming of the God-Man Jesus into the world are full of anxiety, frantic busy-ness, and depression rather than the peace, joy, and hope He came to bring.

Hello, this is Fr. Anthony Perkins, the pastor of St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Woonsocket, RI (the church with the golden domes on Harris Avenue) [and I'm] here to encourage you to make the most out of your preparation for the Nativity; to encourage you be more intentional in making your heart, your family, and your community, fitting places for the Christ child to rest.

Within the Orthodox Christian tradition, the Advent season mirrors that of Great Lent, with 40 days of humility, fasting, and charity. As during Great Lent, we use these ascetic disciplines to empty ourselves of all the destructive passions and habits that have made their homes within our hearts and that have manifested themselves within our lives. Regaining self-control and living a quieter life [in Christ] are the only ways to avoid making the extra family get-togethers and Church services more than just additional events to squeeze into an already jam-packed calendar; and giving gifts to loved ones and those in need more than just additional lines on a credit card bill we already can't afford.

We should not join this fallen world in marking the days leading to the Nativity of Our Lord with impatient frenzy, but by learning to do the very same thing He did for us: [to do this, we must] purify ourselves of all selfishness; center ourselves in God's grace; and allow His peace, mercy, joy, and love fill our lives and spread to the world around us. Christ God was Incarnate as a baby in Bethlehem two thousand years ago, He lived, suffered, died, resurrected, and ascended into Glory so that we might join Him in peace and love here and forevermore.

This is the gift of Christmas being offered to everyone in Woonsocket and in the entire world. Open your arms and open your hearts to receive Him.

We invite you to join us in celebrating the Nativity of Christ at St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church. We are located at 74 Harris Avenue in Woonsocket (with plenty of off-street parking). Most Orthodox still use the Old Julian Church Calendar, so Christmas falls on January 7th for us – well after the hustle-bustle of the Gregorian date has passed. Our Nativity Compline-and-Carol service is on Christmas Eve, January 6th at 7PM; our Nativity Divine Liturgy is at 9:30 on Christmas morning, January 7th and is itself preceded by thirty minutes of caroling led by our wonderful choir. You can learn more about us and our worship schedule at our website: www.stmichaeluoc.org or by calling the rectory at 401-762-3939.

May God bless you as you prepare to receive Him.

+ Fr Anthony Perkins, pastor
St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church

This message was first prepared for broadcast on WOON 1240.