



Schedule of Church Services

Sunday	7:00 - 7:30AM	Matin Prayers
	7:30-10:00AM	Divine Liturgy (Arabic)
	8:00-10:30AM	Divine Liturgy (English)- <i>Sermon following the Gospel reading</i>
	11:00AM-12:00Noon	Sermon in Arabic
	11:15AM-12:00Noon	Sunday School
	12:15-1:00PM	Servants Meeting
	6:00 - 7:00PM	Bible Study N.T. (Arabic)
Wednesday	7:30-10:00AM	Divine Liturgy (Arabic)
Thursday	5:30-7:30AM	Divine Liturgy (for workers)
Friday	7:30-9:00PM	Youth Meeting (H.S. & College)
Saturday	8:00-10:00AM	Divine Liturgy (English)
	5:00-6:30PM	Advanced Hymn Class
	5:30-7:00PM	Bible Study O.T. (Arabic)
	6:30-7:00PM	Beginners Hymn Class
	6:30-8:00PM	Vespers
	8:00-10:00PM	Midnight Praises.
The Priests receive confession by appointment and during Midnight Praises		
Visit our Church Website at: www.Stgeorge-lacopts.org		

Please share the magazine articles with your children and encourage them to submit articles for publication.

Articles may be dropped in the wood box labeled "Magazine articles" (located between the two restrooms)

Or fax: (562) 804-1073,

Or E-mail: Stgeorge12@hotmail.com



January Events

- + **January 4-6, 2001** **Nativity's Paramouni**
 Kiahk 27-28, 1718

- + **January 7** **Nativity Feast**
 Kiahk 29, 1718

- + **January 14** **Circumcision Feast**
 Tobi 6, 1718

- + **January 18** **Epiphany's Paramouni**
 Tobi 10, 1718

- + **January 19** **Epiphany Feast**
 Tobi 11, 1718

- + **January 21** **Cana of Galilee**
 Tobi 13, 1718

- + **January 29** **Theotokos Dormition**
 Tobi 21, 1718



From the writings of our Early Church Fathers

Is Incarnation against God's Nature?

Saint Athanasius the Apostolic

Some people think that Incarnation is against God's nature, as God is a simple immortal Spirit, that is neither compound nor material. Therefore, they claim that it is incompatible with His nature to take any concrete form, whether visible, audible or tangible.

Does this sound reasonable? How dangerous is such an idea to human race and its salvation?

The wrong view on the matter:

The idea that God is not to be incarnated implies a faulty view of matter. Is not matter in all its forms part of God's own creation? What makes it hard to believe that God uses matter as a means of revealing His spirituality, His invisibility and His superiority to the weak and tangible humans? The idea of the impurity of matter contradicts faith and has its origins in paganism and Hinduism, with portray the human being as a spirit that is locked up in a distressing prison, i.e. the body. Therefore, such people torture their bodies with nails and wear them out with exhausting fasting.

Would God create anything impure? Are not our bodies part of His creation? Do they not bear the most meticulous mysteries of His creation and the most profound and true evidence of the existence of the Great Creator? It is not right to attribute any deficiency or imperfection to God's creation.

Man was created holy and lived with God in paradise, in the same body we now have, but chose to listen to the devil's temptation and, consequently, fell into his trap. Then, sin defiled the human nature as a whole: soul and body. Yet, this is not to deny that the human being, as a whole, being originally God's own creation was **“very good”** (Genesis 1: 31). Perhaps this is the real reason behind the adherence of the traditional churches to the use of matter in holy sacraments, such as: water in Baptism, oil in Chrismation and Unction of the sick, and bread and wine in the Eucharist in order to emphasize that all God's creation is holy and the problem lies in misusing matter, rather than matter itself.

The wrong view towards God:

God is in fact a Holy Spirit filling heaven and earth, and Incarnation has not changed His nature. Thus, there is no reason to fear the impact of Incarnation on His Nature. When God takes flesh or makes us hear His voice or see His light, He does not cease to be the simple immortal spirit filling heaven and earth. He has not changed into flesh, God forbid! He took flesh. Is He not capable of doing so?

There are many analogies to illustrate this point. The atmosphere around us is filled with radio and T.V. transmission waves. Such waves can neither be directly seen nor heard with the naked eye and clear, but only through a receiver. Yet, when we receive them in our own set, this does not mean that we have consumed or monopolized them, for these waves do not cease to spread all over the place.

This analogy illustrates that:

- + Waves exist and the fact that we do not see or hear them with the naked eye and ear does not mean that they do not exist.
- + These intangible waves can be made concrete by receiving them in a set. Similarly (taking into account the difference), our Great God is a sublime Spirit Who can take tangible forms, such as fire, sound, light or human flesh.
- + Receiving these waves in a set does not mean their withdrawal from the atmosphere and their being confined solely to this particular set. This is the same God. When he took human flesh, He did not withdraw from heavens as he said: **“No one has ascended to heaven, but He Who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man Who is in heaven”** (John 3: 13)

What we have said about broadcasting waves can be applied to electric power that is embodied in a lamp without being confined to it.

Likewise, Incarnation is not against God’s nature; since God created holy matter, it would not restrict Him is He utilizes it in order to reveal Himself to us.



On the Incarnation

The Birth of Christ and the Birth of Man

From the Monastery of St. Macarius Scetis

Christ was born of the Holy Spirit of God and a virgin called Mary who had no relations with a man. It was a divine birth, the like of which had never occurred before, nor ever would again. The Holy Scriptures had foretold this birth, and all the prophets had spoken prophecies about it which are recorded in many verses. The whole of history was leading up to it and would find in it its culmination. It was even said that time would reach its fullness at His coming. And so it was, and history entered a new phase after His birth.

Now Christ was the **“Word of God”** made flesh, appearing in the form of men, taking on the likeness of a slave (Philippians 2: 7). He lived as a man among men, and called Himself **“The Son of Man”**, but He was possessed of a divine glory which His intimate friends saw with their own eyes, a glory that was unique, **“A glory as of the Only Begotten Son of the Father”** (John 1: 14). He said of Himself that God was His Father (John 5: 18), and called from heaven for His disciples to hear: **“This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased”** (Matthew 3: 17 and Mark 1: 11 and Luke 3:22).

Nevertheless, He freely took upon Himself the role of a slave with an extraordinary and amazing humility, in order to raise up all slaves to the heights of His sonship. **I no longer call you servants, but friends, for I have taught you all I have heard from my Father”** (John 5: 15). He stripped Himself, as far as He was able, of all outward glory to devote Himself to participating with mankind in suffering, that suffering which He was born to bear in full on their behalf, so that its curse might be lifted from the sons of men. He finally crowned His suffering with a death freely accepted, as the payment of a debt and a punishment, on behalf of all the sinners of the earth, so that, through His death, He might win their acquittal. So death is no longer a debt to be paid or a punishment to be undergone by man for his sins and transgressions; it is rather the declaration of his release and forgiveness.

And Christ rose from the dead in glory and splendor according to the plan He had already revealed. By His resurrection, He granted to man the power to overcome death. He also gave mankind a new life

which continues with God after death forever, but which man receives from Christ and through the Spirit of God in the present as a forestate of what is to come. And so as we live now in the resurrection of Christ, death no longer prevents us from participating in a life with God that will never end.

Through His suffering, death and resurrection, Christ embraced the whole world. He gave new birth to mankind through His own birth, healing of suffering through His own suffering, a life-giving death through His own death, and, through His resurrection, justification for another and eternal life. In other words, Christ made man into a new spiritual creation when He was simply a creation from the dust of the earth, and the life of man became eternal in God. And consequently, the homeland, color or race of men are, no longer, a cause for pride or shame. For man, every man, has become like Christ and so, in Christ, like God. Woman is no longer less than man, nor the slave less than the free man, the poor less than the rich or the ignorant less than the wise. These are gifts given by God to man in the birth of Christ, for, in Him, the human race has been raised to the level of His sonship, and so all are called sons of God. And sons enjoy all things equally.

Man was born anew at the birth of Christ to the fatherly inheritance reserved for him in heaven, a joy that can never be taken away from him, an unspeakable glory. This is a free gift to man who, over the ages, has had his fill of hardship, and just as the birth of Christ was God's greatest gift to man, so too this inheritance in heaven is a free gift with it. They are like the sun and the air to the earthly creation. For who can buy the sun or sell the air? So, God in Christ does not sell for a price His righteousness, His resurrection or His inheritance in glory.

“Whoever asks receives, whoever seeks find and whoever knocks has the door opened for him” (John 11: 10). And what is more, He even goes to the door to knock before we do: **“Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I come in and sup with him and he with Me”** (Revelation 3: 20).

Sonship of God has extended over the face of the whole earth to all the sons of men in the birth of Christ.

The Aims of Incarnation

By H.G. Bishop Moussa

After the fall, humanity faced some crucial problems, in addition to some secondary ones. There was no other solution to these problems except through Incarnation of God the Word. For only God could have solved these problems:

1. The way to recognize God:

God is an infinite Spirit, whereas we, having fallen, became finite and confined to matter. So, could God remain high above His heaven, remote from the human being who became stuck to concrete matter? Was it possible for the human being to ascend to the Lord's heaven in spite of his finiteness and weakness? Hence, God took body **“As a wise teacher”** as expressed by St. Athanasius, to become close and tangible to us.

2. The dominion of death:

This is the main core of the problem. **“The wages of sin is death”** (Romans 6: 23). This is a divine sentence of no repeal, not merely as an angry condemnation of evil, but because this is the natural consequence of the fall of the soul. The fallen soul faces death and is doomed eternally. Who can regenerate the human soul and spirit? Who can raise a body after being buried and decomposed? Who can change such a body into a luminous one? Definitely no one but God.

3. The corruption of human nature:

Adam fell and the human nature was defiled and corrupted. Of course, it was possible for God to forgive him though He had warned him against disobedience. The problem did not lie in God's desire to forgive or not, but in the human nature. Who would regenerate it after it had been corrupted? Such a task was impossible for the fallen human being, for any prophet or for an angel. Renewing man required the intervention of the Creator Himself.

4. The dominion of the devil:

The human race subjected itself willingly to the domination of Satan who then seized and oppressed it. At death, even the righteous were brought down to Hades as a waiting place. As paradise was still closed, Satan captured their spirits down there. Who could release humanity from Satan's grasp whether those who are living in this world or the pious souls imprisoned in Hades? Who could break into the unknown and release the captives? None could ever do this except God Himself.

"IN CHRIST WE HAVE . . ."

(Author Unknown)

IN CHRIST WE HAVE . . .

**A LOVE THAT CAN NEVER BE FATHOMED,
A LIFE THAT CAN NEVER DIE,
A RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT CAN NEVER BE TARNISHED,
A PEACE THAT CAN NEVER BE UNDERSTOOD,
A REST THAT CAN NEVER BE DISTURBED,
A JOY THAT CAN NEVER BE DIMINISHED,**

**A HOPE THAT CAN NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED,
A GLORY THAT CAN NEVER BE CLOUDED,
A LIGHT THAT CAN NEVER BE DARKENED,
A PURITY THAT CAN NEVER BE DEFILED,
A BEAUTY THAT CAN NEVER BE MARRED,
A WISDOM THAT CAN NEVER BE BAFFLED,**

RESOURCES THAT CAN NEVER BE EXHAUSTED.

JESUS IS OUR ALL IN ALL!

Rejoice for the Birth of Christ

Rejoice, O righteous ones, and ye heavens be glad. Sing with joy, ye mountains, for the Nativity of Christ. The Virgin sits like the cherubim, holding in her bosom God the incarnate Word; the shepherds do glorify him who was born. The Magi offer presents to the Lord, and the angels give praise, saying, O Lord, hidden from comprehension, glory to thee.

The Father has been pleased and satisfied; the Word has become flesh; and the Virgin has given birth to incarnate God. The star declares, the Magi worship, the shepherds wonder, and creation rejoices.

O virgin Theotokos, O thou who has given birth to the Savior, thou hast revoked the ancient curse of Eve; for thou hast become a Mother according to the pleasure of God, carrying in thy bosom God the incarnate Word. Verily, the mystery is inscrutable; but we all glorify it with faith only, crying with thee and saying, O incomprehensible Lord, glory to thee.

Come, let us praise the Mother of the Savior, who appeared a Virgin even after birth-giving, crying: Rejoice, O living city of God the King, in whom Christ having dwelt worked salvation. Wherefore, we with Gabriel do praise, and with the shepherds do glorify thee, crying: O Theotokos, intercede with Him incarnate of thee to save us.

(Four Ideomelons of the Einos of the Nativity Matins)

INCARNATE WORD! THOU WORD OF GOD ALONE!

To live of love, 'tis to abide with thee. Thou knowest I love
Thee, Jesus Christ, my own!

Thy spirit's fire of love enkindleth me.

By loving thee, I draw the father here down to my heart, to
stay with me always.

Blessed Trinity! Thou art my prisoner dear, of love, to day.

Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897)

Differences

From Mark Sedrak's website

1. Last Christmas, we were thinking about all the things we didn't have; this Christmas, we are thinking about all the things we do have.
2. Last Christmas, we were placing wreaths on the doors of our homes; this Christmas, many are placing wreaths on the graves of our heroes.
3. Last Christmas, many were letting our sons play with toy guns; this Christmas, we are teaching them that guns are not toys.
4. Last Christmas, we were counting our money; this Christmas, we are counting our blessings.
5. Last Christmas, we paid lip service to the real meaning of the holidays; this Christmas, we are paying homage to it.
6. Last Christmas, we were lighting candles to decorate; this Christmas, we are lighting candles to commemorate.
7. Last Christmas, we were digging deep into our bank accounts to find the money to fly home for the holiday; this Christmas, we are digging deep into our souls to find the courage to do so.
8. Last Christmas, we were trying not to let annoying relatives get the best of us; this Christmas, we are trying to give the best of ourselves to them.
9. Last Christmas, we thought it was enough to celebrate the holidays; this Christmas, we know we must also find ways to consecrate them.
10. Last Christmas, we thought a man who could rush down a football field was hero; this Christmas, we know a man who rushes into a burning building is the real one.
11. Last Christmas, we were thinking about the madness of the holidays; this Christmas, we are thinking about the meaning of them.
12. Last Christmas, we were getting on one another's nerves; this Christmas, we are getting on our knees

13. Last Christmas, we were giving thanks for gifts from stores; this Christmas, we are giving thanks for gifts from God.
14. Last Christmas, we were wondering how to give our children all the things that money can buy--the hottest toys, the latest fashions, the newest gadgets; this Christmas, we are wondering how to give them all the things we can't--a sense of security, safety, peace.
15. Last Christmas, we were thinking about all the pressure we are under at the office; this Christmas, we are thinking about all the people who no longer have an office to go to.
16. Last Christmas, we were singing carols; this Christmas, we are singing anthems.
17. Last Christmas, we were thinking how good it would feel to be affluent; this Christmas, we are thinking how good it feels to be alive.
18. Last Christmas, we thought angels were in heaven; this Christmas, we know some are right here on earth.
19. Last Christmas, we were contemplating all the changes we wanted to make in the New Year; this Christmas, we are contemplating all the changes we will have to make in this new reality.
20. Last Christmas, we believed in the power of the pocketbook; this Christmas, we believe in the power of prayer.
21. Last Christmas, we were sharing/spreading/listening to gossip; this Christmas, we are sharing/spreading/listening to the Gospel.
22. Last Christmas, we were complaining about how much of our earnings went to pay taxes; this Christmas, we comprehend that freedom isn't free.
23. Last Christmas, we valued things that were costly; this Christmas, we value things that are holy.
24. Last Christmas, the people we idolized wore football, basketball and baseball uniforms; this Christmas, the people we idolize wear police firefighters and military uniforms.
25. Last Christmas, "peace on earth" is something we prayed for on Sunday mornings; now, it is something we pray for every day. 🌍

A Story

"Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Written by Paul H. Dunn

Once upon a time, there was a man who looked upon Christmas as a lot of humbug. He wasn't a Scrooge. He was a very kind and decent person, generous to his family, upright in all his dealings with other men. But he didn't believe all that stuff about an incarnation which churches proclaim at Christmas. And he was too honest to pretend that he did.

"I am truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, who was a faithful churchgoer, "but I simply cannot understand this claim that God became man. It doesn't make any sense to me."

On Christmas Eve, his wife and children went to church for the midnight service. He declined to accompany them. "I'd feel like a hypocrite," he explained. "I'd much rather stay at home. But I'll wait up for you."

Shortly after his family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window and watched the flurries getting heavier and heavier. "If we must have a Christmas," he reflected, "it's nice to have a white one."

He went back to his chair by the fireside and began to read his newspaper. A few minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. It was quickly followed by another, then another. He thought that someone must be throwing snow balls at his living room window.

When he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They had been caught in the storm, and in a desperate search for shelter had tried to fly through his window.

I can't let those poor creatures lie there and freeze, he thought. But how can I help them? Then he remembered the barn where the children's pony was stabled. It would provide a warm shelter. He quickly put on his coat and galoshes and tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on the light. But the birds didn't come in.

“Food will bring them in”, he thought. So he hurried back to the house for breadcrumbs, which he sprinkled on the snow to make a trail into the barn. To his dismay, the birds ignored the breadcrumbs and continued to flop around helplessly in the snow. He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around and waving his arms. They scattered in every direction - except into the warm, lighted barn.

"They find me a strange and terrifying creature," he said to himself, "and I can't seem to think of any way to let them know they can trust me. If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead them to safety."

Just at that moment, the church bells began to ring. He stood silently for a while, listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. Then he sank to his knees in the snow.

"Now I understand," he whispered. "Now I see why you had to do it."

Smile

A college drama group presented a play in which one character would stand on a trap door and announce, "I descend into hell!" A stagehand below would then pull a rope, the trap door would open, and the character would plunge through. The play was well received.

When the actor playing the part became ill, another actor who was quite overweight took his place. When the new actor announced, "I descend into hell!" the stagehand pulled the rope, and the actor began his plunge, but became hopelessly stuck. No amount of tugging on the rope could make him descend. One student in the balcony jumped up and yelled: "Hallelujah! Hell is full!"

(Author Unknown)

The Dove

(Father Matta El Meskeen)

The appearance of the Holy Spirit, in the visible bodily form of a dove, is a sign that penetrates deeply and directly into the concept of the new spiritual creation completed for us by Christ, through this amazing mystery, in which He appears as the Creator of a spiritual humanity, as the head that produces new offspring for God the Father. As for the appearance of the dove, we see its counterpart in the days of the flood, when water was an instrument of death.

The vengeance clung to it and the wrath of God was in it, for it was intended to bring death and destruction. And the dove's appearance in the final moments of this bitter experience in man's history, returning as it does with a branch in its mouth from an olive tree produced by a world that has been besieged by the curse of destruction, symbolizes the lifting of divine anger and the beginning of God's favor.

Here in its counterpart, we see the Spirit descend from heaven in the bodily form of a dove, and there is a purpose for this. The dove form is not the only one used to symbolize the Holy Spirit or to express its image, for on Pentecost we see the Holy Spirit take the form of tongues of fire.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit's appearance in this form of a dove was a divine expression that, in this instance, the water contained an element of divine life coinciding with the emergence of a new spiritual creation that was being readied for mankind. It is as though the entire period of human history from Adam to Christ was a continuous flood. Then by wedding together the incarnate Word's acceptance of descent into the water and His being made head of a new creation by the Holy Spirit, man's life with God sprang into existence, and became an eternal reality.

Here again, it becomes abundantly clear that the life that God gives to man is, in truth, from beginning to end, a life for life. Christ is alive forever more.

And this life is accompanied by a silent, glorious, divine song chanted by the Holy Spirit who descended as a dove from heaven, and by God Whose voice was brimming with pleasure. Believing hearts alone know how to interpret, how to give expression to this song of silence. For it is a new life overflowing with peace! It is for humble hearts who have shared and daily share in the power of this birth, appointed from above, from water and the Spirit, accompanied by the light of the Word and the favor of God most High!

Thus, in Christ's descent into the Jordan, the Holy Spirit's alighting upon Him and God's voice sounding from the heavens is given its ecclesiastical expression through this feast of Epiphany. Yes, this appearance of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is in truth the consecration of the first baptism on earth in the name of the Trinity. As an effective beginning, it will not and cannot end until the close of the age, for the birth of man is a new birth given by God. Being from above it is spiritual and meant for eternal life.

Thus, a land plagued by thorns, sorrow and curse, a barren land which nurtures man with sufferings even unto death, which gives birth to man in order effectively to kill him, then leaves to time to enshroud him with his sins, where grieving hand bury him every day in the depths of its curse; this very earth, by the birth of Christ, the Word, the Son of God Incarnate, Who descended to the Jordan and there received the Holy Spirit, this very earth, from the perspective of the Church and its baptismal font, has become a new heavenly womb producing new offspring for God, for peace and for eternal life.

Lift up your heart to him, sometimes even at your meals, and when you are in company; the least little remembrance will always be acceptable to Him. You need not cry very loud; he is nearer to us than we are aware of.

Brother Lawrence (c.1605-1691),
(The Practice of the presence of God)

Reflections

+ "To be forbearing and kind, and so forth, are matters of our own choice; and God demands of us only those things of which we have control. And quite reasonably, for He does not call us to grace because of His own need, but because of doing us kindness."

Saint John Chrysostom

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+ "There is nothing impossible unto those who believe; lively and unshaken faith can accomplish great miracles in the twinkling of an eye. Besides, even without our sincere and firm faith, miracles are accomplished, such as the miracles of the sacraments; for God's Mystery is always accomplished, even though we were incredulous or unbelieving."

Saint John of Kronstadt

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+ "If thou wilt, O Lord, Thou canst purify and sanctify me. Here and now I surrender myself to Thy goodness, beseeching Thee to root out of me all that is opposed to Thee and unite me to the company of Thine elect."

St. Parthenius

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+ "Meekness is the fellow-worker of obedience, the guide of brotherhood, a curb for the furious, a check to the irritable, a minister of joy, the imitation of Christ, something proper to the angels, shackles for demons, a shield against perishness. The Lord will teach the meek His way

Saint John of the Ladder

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+ "If you always behave with humility before the Lord, you will never show arrogance towards anyone."

Saint John of Karpathos

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