

**GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA
HELLENIC COMMUNITY OF WA**



PARISH & COMMUNITY OF STS. CONSTANTINE & HELENE

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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A few thoughts on the Birth of Christ

Fr Elpidios

In a short while all of Christendom will be celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, which as emphasised by St John Chrysostom is the metropolis of all feasts. In a short while heaven and earth will be celebrating the Incarnation of the Son of God. The term Incarnation is the theological term used when referring to God taking on human flesh. The Incarnation of the Son of God is a central Christian belief that God became human in the form of Jesus Christ and dwelt among us. For when the time had fully come, God emptied Himself (*kenosis*) and became a human being by being born of the Holy Spirit and of the ever Virgin Mary. This means that God humbled Himself, came down to our level, took on human flesh, and became exactly like us, **except without sin**; for Christ was sinless. The Incarnation was no fantasy or illusion as preached by some in the early Church and commonly known as **Docetism**. In Christianity, Docetism (from the Greek δοκέω [dokeō], "to seem") is the belief that Jesus' physical body was an illusion, as was His crucifixion; that is, Jesus only *seemed* to have a physical body and to physically die, but in reality He was a pure spirit, and hence could not physically die. This **erroneous** belief (which in fact asserted that Christ lacked full humanity) treats the sentence "the Word (*Logos*) became Flesh" found in the Gospel of St. John (1:14) as merely figurative. Docetism has historically been regarded as **heretical**, for the Church has always taught that Christ literally had a body and literally hungered, thirst, as well as actually experiencing pain and sorrow just like we do. The Incarnation was no illusion but a reality.

The Birth of Christ is a historical event. It actually took place two thousand years ago splitting history into BC and AD (*Anno Domini*) which is medieval Latin and which translates to as *In the year of (the/Our) Lord*. However, the feast of the Nativity, like all feasts of our Church, are not only to be seen as events taking place in the remote past, but are also to be perceived as events taking place in the present (now, today). It is for this exact reason that our Christmas liturgical hymns emphasise the present tense. For example during Christmas we chant:

Today the Virgin comes to the cave where she will give birth to the Eternal Word

Today Bethlehem receives Him who reigns forever with the Father

Today all things are filled with joy, for Christ is born of the Virgin

Today angels glorify the newborn babe in hymns worthy of God

Today heaven and earth are united, for Christ is born

Today God has come to earth, and the human person ascends to heaven

Today God, who by nature cannot be seen, is seen in the flesh for our sake

The Church, through the use of the word **Today**, wishes to remind us that we are to perceive the Birth of Christ as taking place now, as if it was taking place for the very first time, and not just as an event that took place many centuries ago.

So what is the purpose of the Incarnation? Why did God humble Himself and become human? Why was Christ born?

Again I will refer to our Christmas liturgical hymns, which may I remind everyone, are not merely songs that we sing, but the liturgical hymns of the Orthodox Church consist of profound theological content and salvific truths which are not to be found in any other Christian denomination. So why was Christ born? The answers are:

- In order to restore the image He made in the beginning
- To set Adam and Eve and all humans free from the ancestral curse
- To destroy the wall which divided God from us humans
- To allow us the opportunity to again re enter paradise
- To remove the darkness that existed in the world and to replace it with the light of wisdom
- To sanctify all of creation and to fill it with joy
- To bring peace to the world
- To bring salvation to the entire human race

Finally, the Incarnation of the Son of God is a mystery. For how can a womb contain Him who is uncontainable? How can God the Son remain in His Father's bosom, yet rest in His mother's arms? How is it that He who holds the entire creation in His hand is now born of a Virgin? How is it that He who in the beginning created the heavens, now lies in a manger? How is it that with the birth of Christ we see the order of nature being overcome and the Virgin Mary conceiving without seed? All these are the mysteries of our faith, which cannot be analysed with a microscope, but which bring great amazement to the human person resulting in us all offering glory to the Trinitarian God.

Christmas Day

Matins Service

&

Divine Liturgy

6am - 9am

Epiphany Celebrations 2011

Annual Diving for the Cross

Everyone is invited to the Special Epiphany service (Diving for the Cross in the river) to be held on:

Sunday 9 January 2011 at 12.00 noon

As was the case last year, this year's service will be held on the foreshore of the Swan River just to the right of Matilda Bay Kiosk on Hackett Drive, Crawley.

Families are asked to supply their own food and drinks as strict hygiene restrictions have made it virtually impossible to provide these for sale.

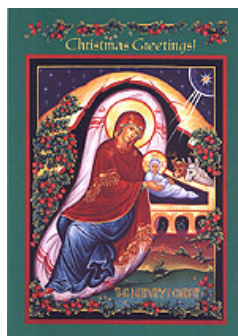
Religious Gifts for Christmas

A variety of sterling silver icons (differing sizes and prices ranging from \$10.00 - \$95.00) have arrived at the *Evangelismos Bookstore* in time for Christmas giving.



Each Clarté Icon is made in Greece from shimmering *pure sterling silver*. The large icons are set into a deep mahogany-coloured wooden backing. Capturing the tradition of Byzantine art and time-honoured artistic techniques, every Clarté Icon is sculpted and molded with the utmost care. The result is an heirloom-quality piece of art that you will treasure for years to come. Some of the icons have 24 karat gold features.

Christmas Cards from \$1.50 each (samples below)



For further information contact the Evangelismos bookstore by calling Catherine on **0434 332 032**.

Sts. Constantine & Helene

Official cutting of the Vasilopita

The official cutting of the Vasilopita (St Basil's Bread) will take place in the Church of Sts. Constantine & Helene on New Year's Day, **Saturday 1 January 2011**, immediately following the Divine Liturgy. The person who finds the \$1 coin in their Vasilopita will in return receive a \$100 coin purchased from the Perth Mint.

The cutting of the Vasilopita commenced in the fourth century, when St. Basil the Great, the father of philanthropy, wanted to distribute money to the poor in his Diocese. He commissioned some women to bake sweetened bread, in which he arranged to place gold coins. Thus the families in cutting the bread to nourish themselves were pleasantly surprised to find the coin.

Prior to cutting the Vasilopita we bless it with the knife crosswise in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We then slice the first piece for our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is first in our life. Then we proceed to slice wedges starting with a piece for the Virgin Mary, St. Basil and the Saint of our Church. Subsequently, we slice pieces for all the parishioners.

Epiphany Home Blessings

If you wish to have your home or workplace blessed for Epiphany (5 January onwards) then email your name, address and a contact number to p.karalis@bigpond.com. A schedule regarding the home blessings will be emailed early January as well as being placed on the Church notice board. This way, parishioners will know which day their suburb will be visited. **Only** supply your address if you have not given Fr Elpidios your details in the past or if you have changed address. Otherwise, you are already on the Epiphany data base from previous years. Having your home blessed and allowing for the Precious Cross to come into your homes is a good way to begin the New Year.

CENTRE FOR THE GREEK LANGUAGE (CGL) EXAMINATIONS 2011

Dear Prospective CGL Examination Candidates for 2011

Next year in May, the CGL (Thessaloniki, Greece) is offering, for the first time, examinations in **six levels of attainment in Greek** as compared to only four levels in the past. The six levels are; **A1 (for children 8-12 years old)**, and **A1 (for adolescents and adults)**, **A2**, **B1**, **B2**, **Γ1** and **Γ2** (according to the presidential decree Π.Δ. 60/30-6-2010 ΦΕΚ Α' 98 of the Greek Government Gazette).

Please note the following information regarding these new levels:

- 1) The equivalence among the old and new levels of the CGL are as follows:

Old CGL levels	New CGL levels
	A1 for children 8-12 years old A1 for adolescents / adults <u>Elementary knowledge</u>
A (Level 1)	A2 <u>Basic knowledge</u>
B (Level 2)	B1 <u>Intermediate knowledge</u>
Γ (Level 3)	B2 <u>Good knowledge</u>
Δ (Level 4)	Γ1 <u>Very good knowledge</u>
	Γ2 <u>Excellent knowledge</u>

- 2) The dates and times of the CGL Examinations for attainment in Greek in May 2011 will be as follows:

Levels of attainment in Greek	Examination dates
A1 (for children 8-12 years old)	Tuesday 10 May
A1 (for adolescents / adults)	Tuesday 10 May
A2	Tuesday 10 May
B1	Tuesday 10 May
B2	Wednesday 11 May
Γ1	Wednesday 11 May
Γ2	Thursday 12 May

*The oral examinations will be held directly after the written ones.

- 3) The examination fees per level of attainment in Greek will be as follows:

O L D L E V E L S	N E W L E V E L S	EXAM INATI ON FEES
	A1	\$110
A	A2	\$130
B	B1	\$130
Γ	B2	\$150
Δ	Γ1	\$150
	Γ2	\$150

- 4) The new website of the Division for the Support and Promotion of the Greek Language (CGL, Thessaloniki, Greece) should be ready by Christmas. It will contain information about the certification of attainment in Greek and the knowledge requirements for each level, according to the new curriculum. The link to the new website is: <http://www.greeklanguage.gr/certification>
- 5) With regard to preparing for the examinations, candidates are informed that until the new sample tests are ready (it is estimated that they will be released on the new website by the forthcoming Christmas), candidates can consult the old website where they can find sample tests for the old levels Α, Β, Γ and Δ, which correspond to Α2, Β1, Β2 and Γ1. Also, until the new books with the practice tests are issued (it is estimated that they will be ready by September 2011), candidates can use the existing books with the practice tests for the old levels Α, Β, Γ and Δ, which the CGL will continue to sell in a restricted number of copies. It should be noted that the above preparation material (old sample tests and old practice tests) are advised to be used as there will be no major change in the structure and content of levels Α2, Β1, Β2 and Γ1 which correspond to the old ones. The only important difference will be in levels Β2, Γ1 and Γ2 which, apart from the already known reading, listening, writing and speaking tasks, will also include a unit which will test *language use* and will focus on Greek grammar (morphology and syntax) and Greek vocabulary.
- 6) Enrolment dates: As is the case each year, enrolments for the 2011 CGL Examinations will commence at the **start of February and conclude by mid-March 2011**. More information will follow next year.
- 7) Contact details: For more information and enrolments in 2011, please note the contact details of the CGL Committee members:
- Dr Angela Evangelinou-Yiannakis (Director): angeliki_777@hotmail.com
 - Mr Pavlos Iosifidis: piosifidis@sag.wa.edu.au; pauliosifidis718@hotmail.com
 - Mrs Evridiki Politi: epoliti62@hotmail.com

- Mrs Katerina Reklitis: kreklitis@sag.wa.edu.au;
katerinarox@hotmail.com
- Mrs Eva Tsapazi: etsapazi@sag.wa.edu.au;
eury.dice99@bigpond.com

The CGL Committee Members and I wish all past and future CGL Candidates a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to receiving your emails and calls of interest in sitting for the forthcoming CGL Examinations next year.

Yours sincerely

Dr Angela Evangelinou-Yiannakis
Director – CGL at St. Andrew’s Grammar

PARISH NEWS

Infant Baptisms

Congratulations to:

Lance Toutountzis and Anthea (nee) Anastas on the baptism of their daughter Alexia. The godfather was Constantinos Tsakalis.

Antonios Kogiopoulos and Rachel (nee) Stribling on the baptism of their son Wesley. The godmother was Dimitra Kogiopoulos.

Geoffrey Richards and Tiffany (nee) Kailis on the baptism of their son Nicholas (Caylan). The godmother was Danielle Kailis.

Keith Russell and Linda (nee) Antartis on the baptism of their daughter Natalia. The godmother was Maria Antartis.

Savva Tsapazi and Dalida (nee) Mammoliti on the baptism of their son Nicholas. The godmother was Antonia Yotopoulos.

Fotios Smyrniotis and Annette (nee) Christopoulos on the baptism of their daughter Niki. The godfather was Theofani Smyrniotis.

Ross Ogilvie and Renata (nee) Patniotis on the baptism of their daughter Hrisoula. The godmother was Vasiliki Patniotis.

Christopher Cronin and Fatimah (nee) Da’awat on the baptism of their son Isaac. The godmother was Elaina Cronin.

Marriages

Congratulations to the following newly weds who were recently married at the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helene:

- Michael Mavromatis and (Ekaterina) Kylie (nee) Mcghie. The bestman was Anthony Bellantoni.
- Stavros Andros and Thomay (nee) Carolides. The bestman was John Andros.

Funerals

Our deepest sympathy to the families of the following people who recently reposed in the Lord:

- Leila Lambetsos aged 49
- Lambro Contos aged 85
- Ekaterina Mavrothalassitis aged 84
- Angela Anastas aged 65
- Chrisafina Samiotis aged 80
- Dimitrios Georgiadis aged 74
- Eleni Nicolaou aged 89

Services prior to Christmas

- **Monday 20 December 8am - 10am** St Ignatios the Godbearer
- **Wednesday 22 December 8am - 10am** St Anastasia
- **Friday 24 December 6.30am - 10.30am** Christmas Eve

Annual Christmas Bowl

A special Church tray collection for the annual Christmas bowl will take place on **Sunday 9 January** towards the end of the Divine Liturgy. The money collected from all Churches of our Archdiocese will go towards our fellow human beings who are in need and for whom Christ was born and died for.

Overseas News

Greek Orthodox Church in America Renews Fight Over Site

(Source: By Josh Barbanel, The Wall Street Journal, Dec 7, 2010)

The leaders of St. Nicholas Church, the small whitewashed Greek Orthodox Church destroyed by falling debris on Sept. 11, 2001, have begun legal action against the Port Authority demanding that the church be rebuilt under the terms of a deal worked out several years ago.

A claim filed against the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey by church leaders and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America on Monday accused the agency, which is overseeing Ground Zero's rebuilding, of engaging in "arrogance, bad faith and fraudulent conduct" and "shabby and unlawful treatment."

Under state law, the church is required to file a notice of claim against the Port Authority for some of its claims, and wait 60 days before it can go to court, according to Mark. G. Cunha, a lawyer for the church.

In 2008, after years of discussions, the Port Authority and the church announced an agreement to rebuild the church, which was originally located on Cedar Street, on a nearby site on Liberty Street. As part of the deal, the Port Authority said it would pay \$20 million toward the cost of the new church.

But in March, the deal fell through. The Port Authority accused the church of making excessive demands, while church leaders say the Port Authority unilaterally withdrew from negotiations.

John Kelly, a spokesman for the Port Authority, said officials hadn't yet seen the filing and couldn't comment on it. But he said: "We very much hope the Orthodox Church rebuilds on their original site."

In papers served on Monday the church is now seeking to compel the Port Authority to live up to the terms of what the church said is a "binding preliminary agreement."

It said that even after the Port Authority backed away from the agreement, the authority began digging in the site of the old church and is trespassing "without permission, notice or any legal justification." The underground portion of the old church site is part of what is to become an underground

vehicle security center, where trucks entering the site would be searched.

"Filing a lawsuit is not something that we really want to do," said the Rev. Mark Arey, the ecumenical officer for the archdiocese and a spokesman for the church. "We have come to this point because we have been ignored and bullied."

As a measure of the frayed relations between the Port Authority and the church, the suit cites a series of alleged civil-rights and constitutional violations, including the charge that the Port Authority had interfered with the church's right to freely exercise religion. It also accuses the Port Authority of defaming the church.

In addition to the Port Authority, the claim also names the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. as a potential defendant. The LMDC said it didn't have a comment on the matter.

The church traces its roots to Greek immigrants in 1916, and services began on the Cedar Street site in 1922. On Sunday, scores of families from St. Nicholas and other nearby churches gathered at Ground Zero in a vigil to pray for the rebuilding of the church on the eve of the annual feast day of St. Nicholas.

*On behalf of the Parish / Community of
Sts. Constantine & Helene we would
like to wish everyone a Blessed and
Holy Christmas.
May 2011 be a year of Health and
Spiritual growth.*

Η Κατά Σάρκα Γέννησις του Χριστού

Μετά τον Ευαγγελισμό της Παρθένου Μαρίας από τον αρχάγγελο Γαβριήλ και ενώ πλησίαζε ο καιρός να τελειώσουν οι εννιά μήνες από την υπερφυσική σύλληψη του Χριστού στην παρθενική της μήτρα, ο Καίσαρ Αύγουστος διέταξε απογραφή του πληθυσμού του ρωμαϊκού κράτους. Τότε ο Ιωσήφ μαζί με τη Θεοτόκο, ξεκίνησαν για τη Βηθλεέμ, για να απογραφούν εκεί. Έτσι ξεκίνησαν από την Ναζαρέτ και ύστερα από κοπιαστικό ταξίδι έφτασαν στην Βηθλεέμ, όπου επειδή είχε συγκεντρωθεί πλήθος κόσμου δεν κατάφεραν να βρουν κατάλυμα, παρά μόνο ένα φτωχικό σπήλαιο. Εκεί η Θεοτόκος γέννησε τον Κύριο Ιησού Χριστό και σπαργάνωσε σαν βρέφος τον Κτίστη των απάντων. Έπειτα Τον έβαλε επάνω στη φάτνη των αλόγων ζώων, διότι «έμελλε να ελευθέρωση ημάς από την αλογίαν», όπως χαρακτηριστικά γράφει ο Άγιος Νικόδημος ο Αγιορείτης. Από τότε, όλοι οι πιστοί χριστιανοί με χαρά ψάλλουν τον ύμνο των αγγέλων εκείνης της νύκτας: «Δόξα εν υψίστοις Θεω και επί γης ειρήνη, εν ανθρώποις ευδοκία» (βλ. Ευαγγέλιο Λουκά, Β' 1-20). Δόξα δηλαδή, ας είναι στο θεό, που βρίσκεται στα ύψιστα μέρη του ουρανού και στη γη ολόκληρη, που είναι παραγμένη από την αμαρτία ας βασιλεύσει η θεία ειρήνη, διότι ο Θεός έδειξε την αγάπη Του στους ανθρώπους με την ενανθρώπηση του Υιού Του.

Να σημειώσουμε εδώ, ότι η γιορτή των Χριστουγέννων καθιερώθηκε για πρώτη φορά την 25η Δεκεμβρίου του 397 μ.Χ. επί πατριαρχείας Αγ. Ιωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου. Κατ' άλλους ο πατριάρχης Ιεροσολύμων Ιουβενάλιος, χάρισε τις δύο γιορτές των Φώτων και των Χριστουγέννων, οι οποίες παλιότερα γίνονταν την ίδια μέρα, δηλαδή την 6η Ιανουαρίου.

(<http://www.saint.gr/index.aspx>)