

A traditional Orthodox icon of the Nativity. The Virgin Mary is shown kneeling in prayer, holding the infant Jesus in her arms. The baby Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes and lies in a manger. A donkey and an ox are present, looking at the newborn Christ. The scene is set in a cave with rocky walls and a star in the sky.

Christian Light

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Fr. Philip's Christmas Message: The Mystery of God's Love

Everything in our Church liturgical practice, hymnology and iconography is given to us for our spiritual nourishment. This is very clearly the case in our celebration of Christmas as we shall see below.

It turns out that even the date that we celebrate Christmas on, December 25th, has deep theological significance. Historians like to say that celebrating Christmas on this date served the purpose of Christianizing the pagan celebration of the sun at the winter solstice. This explanation is not fully satisfactory because this justification first appears in the 4th century yet the celebration of Christmas on this date (in the West first) appeared much earlier. It turns out that this date, due to its connection with the date of another Church holiday, becomes a summary of salvation history. A first explanation of the date December 25th could be that it is exactly nine months after March 25th which today is the celebration of the Annunciation of Mary, the conception of Christ in the womb of the Theotokos. However, the celebration of the Annunciation on this date is actually a practice from the end of the fourth century and therefore March 25th has another deeper theological meaning from the very beginning of Church history. It turns out that Christ was crucified and placed in the tomb on 14 Nissan of the Jewish calendar (the Jewish Passover), which that year was on March 25th according to the Roman Calendar in use then. So the original reason for the celebration of Christmas on December 25th was that it

was exactly nine months after the Passion of our Lord in the year when he was crucified and placed in the tomb for us. Why nine months? The Church understood everything in the light of the Passion and Resurrection and this Passion and Resurrection was not understood chronologically as the end of a long process. Therefore the Passion gave birth to Christ and not the other way around! Thus, in the icon of the Nativity, the birth of Christ is clearly seen in terms of the Passion. Notice in the icon that he already from his birth has a Cross in His halo – this is because we only can see Him as the crucified and risen Lord. As we read in the Gospel of St. Luke, when the disciples met the risen Christ on the Road to Emmaus, they didn't understand who he was until he "expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27) and showed them how everything in the Old Testament talked about Him and how he had to suffer and die in order to enter into His glory (Luke 24:26 - and that it is the same thing for us in our lives!).

Christ in the Nativity icon is also lying in the manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. The manger looks like a stone sarcophagus — a tomb — and he is already wrapped like a mummy. And what do you put in a manger? Food. This is because Christ is our food. What does Bethlehem mean? House of bread. Christ is our bread and this is the bread He offers us today in Church in Holy Communion. This life is not our final destination, rather it is our desert-journey

*Assumption of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church
97 Walcott Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860*

Reverend Dr. Philip Zymaris
Protopresbyter



E-mail: pzymaris@hchc.edu
(401) 725-3127 Phone (401) 725-9270 Fax
(857) 204-9021 Emergencies
Web Site: www.assumptionri.org

SUNDAY SERVICES

Orthros at 8 A.M. and Divine Liturgy at 9:30 A.M.

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 8:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.
Elizabeth Lazouras
secretary@assumptionri.org

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as we make our way to the promised land, the Kingdom of God! We escape sin (Egypt) and enter into this desert by passing through the red sea, this is our baptism, after which we journey in our life towards the promised land as we eat the manna from heaven sent to us by God in the Church. The Christ child is in a cave. Why? Look at how the cave and the Theotokos together form one shape, an oval enclosure, that frames the Christ child. In the synthesis of the icon this shape is intended to suggest a womb, but also the tomb of Christ which was a cave! This is to follow scripture and hymnography that clearly connect the tomb and the womb that held Christ. Isaiah 54:1 announces the following prophesy referring to the Theotokos: "Rejoice, O barren woman who does not bear; break forth and cry out, you who are not in travail, for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman." Significantly, this reference to birth is read only once a year only at the "un-nailing vespers" of Holy Friday right before we put the dead Christ into His tomb, the "Epitaphio." In the Gospels and in our hymnography it is emphasized that Christ was put into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea that was "hewn out of the rock" (Luke 23:53) – i.e., a cave – and that it was "a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid" (John 19:41). So at the Passion we have Joseph of Arimathea, who was "a good and just man" (Luke 23:50) and his virgin tomb, and in Christmas we have Joseph the betrothed, who was also described as "a just man" (Matt. 1:19), and the virgin womb of the Theotokos, his betrothed. The idea here is that the real beginning/conception that led to the birth of Christ and everything we celebrate in Church is the Passion! So for this reason the birth is celebrated nine months after the Passion! In keeping with this connection, the icon of the Nativity uses imagery from the Passion to understand the birth. As we said above, the Nativity actually comes from the Passion and not the other way around! This is why not only the icon of the Nativity, but all Orthodox icons, give us not one slice of history but tell us the whole story of salvation in one picture!

Knowing what God has done for us in the Nativity, but also in all the feasts of the Church, let us rejoice in His love for us that is seen most clearly in the mystery of His Passion and Resurrection. May this love of God fill all of you and your families with every blessing from God this Christmas and always!

Merry Christmas!

Fr. Philip, Presbyteria Xanthippi and Family



Χριστουγεννιάτικο μήνυμα π. Φιλίππου: Τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ

Ὁλη ἡ λειτουργικὴ πράξις, ἡ ὑμνολογία καὶ ἡ ἀγιογραφία τῆς ἐκκλησίας μᾶς δίδονται ὡς τροφή γιὰ τὴν πνευματικὴν μας ἀνάπτυξη. Αὐτὸ καθίσταται σαφέστατο στὴ γιορτὴ τῶν Χριστουγέννων ὅπως θὰ δοῦμε ἀμέσως παρακάτω.

Μία ἱστορικὴ ἀναδρομὴ μᾶς δείχνει ὅτι ἀκόμη καὶ ἡ ἡμερομηνία στὴν ὁποία γιορτάζουμε τὰ Χριστούγεννα, ἡ 25ῃ Δεκεμβρίου, κρύβει μία βαθιὰ θεολογικὴ σημασία. Πολλοὶ ἱστορικοὶ τώρα ἀρέσκονται νὰ λένε ὅτι ἡ ἐκκλησία ἀποφάσισε νὰ γιορτάζει τὰ Χριστούγεννα στίς 25 Δεκεμβρίου γιὰ νὰ ἐκχριστιανίσει τὴν παλαιὰ εἰδωλολατρικὴ γιορτὴ τοῦ ἡλίου ποὺ γιορταζόταν τὴν ἴδια ἡμερομηνία. Ἡ ἐξήγηση αὐτὴ δὲν εἶναι πλήρως ἱκανοποιητικὴ, διότι ἡ πρώτη φορὰ ποὺ δίδεται στίς πηγές μία τέτοια ἀναφορὰ στὴν γιορτὴ τοῦ Ἡλίου καὶ τὴν ὑποτιθέμενη σκόπιμη πρόταση τῆς ἐκκλησίας νὰ σβῇ τὴν παγανιστικὴ γιορτὴ αὐτὴ μὲ τὸν ἐορτασμὸ τῶν Χριστουγέννων τὴν ἴδια ἡμέρα, ἐμφανίζεται στὸν τέταρτο αἰῶνα. Ἀλλὰ ἡ Ἐκκλησία (πρῶτα στὴ Δύση) γιόρταζε τὰ Χριστούγεννα σ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἡμερομηνία ἀπὸ πολὺ πιὸ πρὶν. Ἐπομένως, ὑπάρχει βαθύτερος λόγος γιὰ τὴ συγκεκριμένη ἡμερομηνία: ἡ ἡμερομηνία αὐτὴ συνδέεται μὲ μία ἄλλη σημαντικότερη ἐκκλησιαστικὴ γιορτὴ καὶ ἡ σύνδεση αὐτὴ καθιστᾷ τὰ Χριστούγεννα μία μικρὴ περίληψη ὅλης τῆς ἱστορίας τῆς σωτηρίας. Ἡ 25ῃ Δεκεμβρίου εἶναι ἀκριβῶς 9 μῆνες μετὰ τὴν 25ῃ Μαρτίου, στὴν ὁποία γιορτάζουμε τὸν Εὐαγγελισμό τῆς Θεοτόκου. Ὁ Εὐαγγελισμὸς ὅμως ἄρχισε νὰ γιορτάζεται ἀπὸ τὸ τέλος τοῦ 4ου αἰῶνα καὶ γι' αὐτὸ ἡ ἡμερομηνία τῆς 25ῃς Μαρτίου κρύβει ἕνα βαθύτερο νόημα ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας ποὺ ἀπαιτεῖ τὸν ἐορτασμὸ τῶν Χριστουγέννων 9 μῆνες μετὰ. Ἡ μελέτη τῶν πηγῶν μᾶς πληροφορεῖ ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς τάφηκε στίς 14 Nisan στὸ Ἑβραϊκὸ ἡμερολόγιο (τὸ Ἑβραϊκὸ Πάσχα) ποὺ τὴν χρονιὰ ἐκείνη ἔπεσε στίς 25 Μαρτίου στὸ Ρωμαϊκὸ ἡμερολόγιο. Ὅποτε, ὁ λόγος γιὰ τὸ ὁποῖο ἡ ἐκκλησία γιόρταζε τὰ Χριστούγεννα στίς 25ῃ Δεκεμβρίου εἶναι διότι ἦταν ἀκριβῶς 9 μῆνες μετὰ τὰ Πάθη τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τὸ πρῶτο Πάσχα. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἔβλεπε τὴν ἱστορία τῆς σωτηρίας μόνο κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ φῶς τοῦ Σταυροῦ καὶ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως καὶ ὄχι ὡς μία χρονικὴ, ἱστορικὴ διαδρομὴ ποὺ καταλήγει τελικὰ στὸν Σταυρὸ καὶ στὴν Ἀνάσταση ὡς ἀποτέλεσμα. Ἐπομένως πηγαίνουμε ἀπὸ τὰ Πάθη στὴν γέννηση καὶ ὄχι χρονολογικὰ ἀπὸ τὴ γέννηση στὰ Πάθη μετὰ! Αὐτὸ φαίνεται σαφῶς στὴν εἰκόνα τῶν Χριστουγέννων, καθὼς ἡ γέννηση τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐμφανίζεται κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ φῶς τῶν Παθῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Παραδείγματός χάριν, παρατηροῦμε ὅτι, ἤδη ἀπὸ τὴ γέννησίν του, ὁ Χριστὸς ἐμφανίζεται μὲ ἕναν σταυρὸ στὸ φωτοστέφανό του, καὶ αὐτὸ διότι καταλαβαίνουμε τὴν

ταυτότητα τοῦ Χριστοῦ μόνον ὡς τοῦ σταυρωμένου καὶ ἀναστημένου Κυρίου. Ὅπως διαβάζουμε στὸ Κατὰ Λουκᾶν Εὐαγγέλιον, ὅταν οἱ μαθητὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνάντησαν τὸν Χριστὸ στὴν ὁδὸ πρὸς τοὺς Ἑμμαοὺς, δὲν κατάλαβαν ποιὸς ἦταν μέχρι νὰ τοὺς διερμηνεύσει «πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἐαυτοῦ» (Λκ. 24:27), καὶ τοὺς ἐξήγησε ὁ Χριστὸς ὅτι ἔπρεπε νὰ περάσει ἀπὸ τὸν Σταυρὸ γιὰ νὰ δοξασθεῖ (Λκ. 24:26 - καὶ τὸ ἴδιο ἰσχύει καὶ γιὰ μᾶς στὴ ζωὴ μας!).

Ἐπιπλέον, βλέπουμε στὴν εἰκόνα ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς ξαπλώνει σπαργανωμένος σὲ φάτνη. Ἡ φάτνη μοιάζει μὲ τάφο καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς μοιάζει μὲ μούμια. Καὶ τί βάζουμε σὲ φάτνη; Φαγητό. Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι ἡ τροφή μας. Τί σημαίνει Βηθλεέμ; Οἶκος τοῦ ἄρτου. Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι ὁ ἄρτος μας καὶ αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ ψωμὶ ποὺ μᾶς προσφέρει σήμερα στὴν Ἐκκλησία ἢ Θεία Κοινωνία. Ἡ ζωὴ μας αὐτὴ δὲν εἶναι ὁ τελικὸς προορισμὸς μας ἀλλὰ εἶναι ἡ πορεία μας καθὼς πορευόμαστε πρὸς τὴ γῆ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, τὴ Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ! Ξεφεύγουμε ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτία (Αἴγυπτο) καὶ μπαίνουμε στὴν ἔρημο αὐτὴ ἀφοῦ περνᾶμε τὴν ἐρυθρὰ θάλασσα ποὺ συμβολίζει τὴ βάπτισή μας μετὰ ἀπὸ τὴν ὁποία πορευόμαστε στὴν ἔρημο τῆς ζωῆς πρὸς τὸν τελικὸ προορισμὸ μας. Στὴ πορεία αὐτὴ τῆς ἐρήμου τῆς ζωῆς μας τρῶμε τὸ μάννα ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ποὺ εἶναι τὸ ψωμὶ τῆς κοινωνίας ποὺ μᾶς προσφέρει ἡ Ἐκκλησία. Παρατηροῦμε ἐπὶ πλέον ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι σὲ σπήλαιο. Γιατί; Κοιτάξτε πῶς στὴ σύνθεση τῆς εἰκόνας τὸ σπήλαιον καὶ ἡ Θεοτόκος μαζὶ κάνουν ἕνα σχῆμα ποὺ πλαισιώνει τὸν Χριστό. Τὸ σχῆμα αὐτὸ σκοπεύει νὰ θυμίζει μία μήτρα, παραπέμπει ὅμως καὶ στὸ τάφο Του ποὺ ἦταν σπήλαιο. Καὶ τὸ σπήλαιο καὶ ἡ μήτρα τῆς Θεοτόκου κράτησαν τὸ Χριστό. Αὐτὸ τονίζεται στὴν ἀγία γραφὴ καὶ στὴν ὑμνωδία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ποὺ συνδέουν τὸ σπήλαιο-τάφο ποὺ κράτησε τὸ Χριστὸ στὴ γέννα του καὶ τὸν θάνατό του μὲ τὴν κοιλιὰ τῆς Θεοτόκου ποὺ κράτησε τὸ Χριστό. Στὸν Ἡσαΐα 54:1 ὑπάρχει ἡ προφητεία γιὰ τὴν Παναγία ποὺ λέει «εὐφράνθητι στεῖρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουσα, ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον ἢ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα, ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου, μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα». Αὐτὸ τὸ χωρίο, ποὺ ἀναφέρεται σὲ μητέρα καὶ γέννα, διαβάζεται στὴν Ἐκκλησία μόνο μία φορὰ τὸ χρόνο στὸν ἐσπερινὸ τῆς ἀποκαθλώσεως (τῆς Μεγάλης Παρασκευῆς) ἀκριβῶς πρὶν τὴν στιγμὴν ποὺ βάζουμε τὸν νεκρὸ Χριστὸ στὸν τάφο Του, στὸν ἐπιτάφιο! Ὅποτε ὁ τάφος καὶ ἡ μήτρα τῆς γυναίκας ποὺ εὐφραίνεται συνδέονται. Ἐξάλλου, στὰ Εὐαγγέλια καὶ στὴν ὑμνογραφία μας τονίζεται ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς τέθηκε «ἐν μνήματι λαξευτῷ» (Λκ. 23:53) - δηλαδὴ σπήλαιο! - τοῦ Ἰωσήφ Ἀριμαθείας, τὸ ὁποῖο μνῆμα ἦταν «μνημεῖον

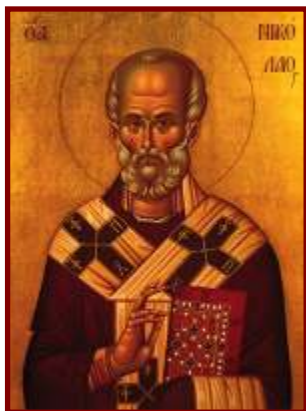


καινὸν ἐν ᾧ οὐδέπω οὐδεὶς ἦν τεθημένος» (Ἰωάνν. 19:41). Ἐπομένως στὸ Πάθος ἔχουμε τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθείας, ὁ ὁποῖος ἦταν «ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος» (Λκ. 23:50), καὶ τὸν παρθενικὸ τάφο του, καὶ στὰ Χριστούγεννα ἔχουμε τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν Μνήστορα τῆς Θεοτόκου, ὁ ὁποῖος περιγράφεται καὶ αὐτὸς ὡς «δίκαιος» (Ματθ. 1:19), καὶ τὴν παρθενικὴ μήτρα τῆς μνηστευομένης του. Ἡ ἰδέα ἐδῶ εἶναι ὅτι ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀρχὴ ποὺ ὁδήγησε στὸν Χριστὸ καὶ ὅλα ὅσα γιορτάζουμε στὴν Ἐκκλησία ἐτησίως δὲν εἶναι ἡ γέννησή Του ἀλλὰ τὰ Πάθη Του. Προηγούνται δηλαδὴ τὰ Πάθη Του καὶ ὅλα στὴν Ἐκκλησία προέρχονται ἀπὸ αὐτά! Ἔτσι, γι' αὐτὸν τὸ λόγο ἀκριβῶς ἡ γέννηση γιορτάζεται 9 μῆνες μετὰ τὸ πρῶτο Πάσχα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὰ Πάθη Του εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινὴ «σύλληψη» τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ τάφος-σπήλαιο εἶναι ἡ μήτρα του, καὶ γι' αὐτὸ ἡ εἰκόνα τῆς γεννήσεώς Του εἶναι γεμάτη μὲ διάφορες ἄλλες ἀναφορὲς στὰ Πάθη Του. Ὅποτε, ὄχι μόνον ἡ εἰκόνα τῆς γεννήσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀλλὰ ὅλες οἱ Ὁρθόδοξες εἰκόνες, δὲν μᾶς παρουσιάζουν ἀπλῶς ἓνα στιγμιότυπο τῆς ἱστορίας, ἀλλὰ ὅλην τὴν ἱστορία τῆς σωτηρίας ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴ μέχρι τὸ τέλος!

Συνεπῶς, γνωρίζοντας τι ἔχει κάνει ὁ Θεὸς γιὰ μᾶς στὴ γέννηση, ἀλλὰ καὶ σὲ ὅλες τὶς γιορτὲς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἅς χαροῦμε στὴν ἄφραστη ἀγάπη ποὺ ἔχει γιὰ μᾶς ὅπως φαίνεται σαφῶς στὸ μυστήριό τῶν Παθῶν καὶ τῆς Ἀναστάσεώς του ποὺ εἶναι ἡ βάση ὅλων τῶν ἄλλων γιορτῶν. Λόγω τῶν Παθῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰ Χριστούγεννα ἔχουν μία σημασία ποὺ πᾶει πολὺ πέρα ἀπὸ μία χαριτωμένη φολκλορικὴ ἱστοριούλα μὲ ἓνα μωράκι σὲ μία φάτνη. Εἴθε τὸ βάθος αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτὴ νὰ πλημμυρίζει ἐσᾶς καὶ τὶς οἰκογένειές σας μὲ κάθε εὐλογία τοῦ Θεοῦ αὐτὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα καὶ πάντοτε!

Καλὰ Χριστούγεννα!

π. Φίλιππος, Πρεσβυτέρα Ξανθίππη, καὶ παιδιὰ



St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra . . .

This Saint lived during the reign of Saint Constantine the Great and reposed in 330. As a young man, he desired to espouse the solitary life. He made a pilgrimage to the holy city, Jerusalem, where he found a place to withdraw to devote himself to prayer. It was made known to him, however, that this was not the will of God for him, but that he should return to his homeland to be a cause of salvation for many. He returned to Myra, and was ordained bishop. He became known for his abundant mercy, providing for the poor and needy, and delivering those who had been unjustly accused. No less was he known for his zeal for the truth. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council of the 318 Fathers at Nicaea in 325;

upon hearing the blasphemies that Arius brazenly uttered against the Son of God, Saint Nicholas struck him on the face. Since the canons of the Church forbid the clergy to strike any man at all, his fellow bishops were in perplexity what disciplinary action was to be taken against this hierarch whom all revered. In the night our Lord Jesus Christ and our Lady Theotokos appeared to certain of the bishops, informing them that no action was to be taken against him, since he had acted not out of passion, but extreme love and piety. The Dismissal Hymn for holy hierarchs, The truth of things hath revealed thee to thy flock ... was written originally for Saint Nicholas. He is the patron of all travelers, and of sea-farers in particular; he is one of the best known and best loved Saints of all time.

The Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos . . .

According to the ancient tradition of the Church, since Saint Anna, the Ancestor of God, was barren, she and her husband Joachim remained without children until old age. Therefore, sorrowing over their childlessness, they besought God with a promise that, if He were to grant them the fruit of the womb, they would offer their offspring to Him as a gift. And God, hearkening to their supplication, informed them through an Angel concerning the birth of the Virgin. And thus, through God's promise, Anna conceived according to the laws of nature, and was deemed worthy to become the mother of the Mother of our Lord (see also Sept. 8).





December 2019



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

1 14th SUNDAY OF LUKE 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy	2 6 to 8 P.M. Lyssikatos Class	3 4:15 Greek School 7 P.M. Parish Council	4 4:15 Greek School	5	6 ST. NICHOLAS 8 A.M. Orthros 9 A.M. Divine Liturgy	7
8 10th SUNDAY OF LUKE 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy Sunday School Elections and General Assembly 4 P.M. Ahepa Sunday Night Football	9 6 to 8 P.M. Lyssikatos Class	10 4:15 Greek School	11 4:15 Greek School	12 ST. SPYRIDON 8 A.M. Orthros 9 A.M. Divine Liturgy	13	14
15 11th SUNDAY OF LUKE 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy Sunday School	16 6 to 8 P.M. Lyssikatos Class	17 4:15 Greek School	18 Bread Pick-Ups 10 A.M. to Noon 5 P.M. to 7 P.M. 4:15 Greek School	19 Bread Pick-Ups 10 A.M. to Noon 6 P.M. to 8 P.M.	20 Christmas Visits by Fr. Philip and the Visitation Committee (shut-ins)	21 Bread Pick-Ups 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. Christmas Visits by Fr. Philip and the Visitation Committee (shut-ins)
22 SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy Choir Sings Christmas Carols Christmas Program PTO Reception	23	24 DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS 8 A.M. Orthros and Royal Hours CHRISTMAS EVE Christmas Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 5:30 P.M.	25 CHRISTMAS Nativity of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ 8 A.M. Orthros 9 A.M. Divine Liturgy OFFICE CLOSED 	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27 ST. STEPHEN THE PROTOMARTYR AND DEACON 8 A.M. Orthros 9 A.M. Divine Liturgy	28
29 SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy	30	31		 	 	 

The Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Flesh



The story of the Nativity of Christ is beautifully told in the Holy Scriptures. The story is found in [Matthew 1:18-25](#) and in [Luke 2:1-20](#). No matter how often the Birth of Jesus is told, we realize that it is an important event. As the story is told by the Apostles, the Roman Empire was powerful. The Romans had conquered much of the then known world. Judea and Samaria, what we know today as Israel, were included in their conquests. Emperor Augustus ordered that a census be taken in all his lands. He needed to know how many people lived in the empire so he could tax them. Everyone had to go to the town of their family's origin to register for the census. This meant that Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. They were descendants of King David and Bethlehem was the City of David.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and it was a great distance from Bethlehem. It was about 100 miles over very rugged roads. Moreover, Mary was expecting the baby and it was almost time for her to give birth. Bethlehem was a small town and there were many descendants of David who had come to register for the census. By the time Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, there was no place for them to stay. Joseph tried very hard to find a place to

sleep that evening. There was no room at the inn. Finally, Joseph found a cave-like place where they could rest. This place was used by shepherds to protect their sheep in stormy weather. It was here that Mary gave birth to Jesus. The baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the straw in the manger.

Now, that night the shepherds were out in the fields guarding their sheep. Suddenly, there was a bright light which startled the shepherds. The light was so bright that it turned the night into daylight. Of course, the shepherds were frightened. Nothing such as this had ever happened. Soon an angel appeared and calmed them. The angel said:

"Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior; which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12).

Then a larger group of angels appeared. They praised and glorified God and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). When the angels finished singing, they disappeared and the light began to fade. It became dimmer and dimmer until it was dark again. The shepherds were awed. They didn't know what to do. Finally, they decided to leave their flocks of sheep and go to Bethlehem. They decided that they wanted to see for themselves what the angels had told them. When they got to Bethlehem, they found Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. They fell to their knees and adored Jesus.

Some Wise Men came from the East for they knew of the coming of Jesus. They had seen a star that told them that a new king had been born to the Jews. They followed the star and were looking for the child. At this time the governor of Judea was King Herod. He was a wicked man and was feared and hated by the people. When Herod heard about the Wise Men looking for the child, he invited them to his palace. Herod asked the Wise Men to find the child so that he, too, could worship Him. But Herod was lying. He did not want anyone to take his place. The Wise Men went on to look for Jesus. The Star led them to Jesus and Mary. When the Wise Men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshipped Him. They gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Wise Men left but did not return to Herod. They had a dream that warned them that Herod wanted to harm Jesus. Instead, they returned to their native country by a different route.

Icon of the Nativity

The icon of the Nativity tells the story of Christ's birth from the Scriptures. It also shows that all creation is taking part in Christ's birth. The angels give thanks with their song; the heavens give the star; the Wise Men give their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The poor, humble shepherds give their praise and amazement; the earth gives the cave, and humanity gives the Virgin.

This Holy Icon is an icon with many scenes. First, it stresses the importance of the Theotokos, the Mother of Jesus. She is placed in the center and is the largest figure in the icon. In this icon, she is kneeling with crossed arms, looking at the Christ child. The three stars, denoting her virginity before, during, and after the Nativity, are on her garments. The Christ Child, in the center of the icon, is in swaddling clothes and is lying in the manger. In the background is the dark cave where He was born. In the cave are an ox and a donkey guarding the newborn Babe. Even though the Gospels say nothing of the cave, this information is from Holy Tradition. Neither do the Gospels speak of the ox and the donkey, but all icons of the Nativity include these animals. Including the animals in the icon fulfills the prophecy of [Isaiah 1:3](#), "The ox knows his master, and the donkey his master's crib; but Israel does



not know me, and the people have not regarded me." The long ray of light from the star points directly to the cave. This ray comes from the star and travels to all parts of the world. It teaches that this bright star is an astronomical happening, and is a messenger from heaven announcing the birth of Jesus.

On the left hand side of the icon is another scene. The Wise Men, who were led by the star, are riding horses to bring their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus. The Wise Men are of various ages. One is without a beard. In those days, young men did not wear beards. The other Wise Man has long hair and a long beard, which indicates that he is much older. These details teach that regardless of age and appearance, the Good News was given to each and everyone.

Opposite the Wise Men is the scene with the humble shepherds. An angel proclaims the glad tidings. A young shepherd plays a reed instrument. This scene reveals that the music of the humans was added to the hymn of the angels. Across from the shepherd's scene is the heavenly choir of angels. They are giving glory to God. The angels serve two purposes in the Nativity of Christ. They give glory to God and announce the good news to all mankind.

The background shows very rugged terrain. This is not true representation of the land in this area. Joseph could not find room in Bethlehem, so they went outside of Bethlehem to a cave. This rocky mountain formation only serves as a background for the event. In the lower part of the icon are two

more scenes. In the right hand corner are the two women Joseph brought to take care of the Christ child. They are bathing Him just as any baby is bathed. The humanity of Jesus is clearly shown in this setting.

Opposite the bathing of Jesus scene sits a sad and worried Joseph. He is not part of the central group the Christ Child and the Theotokos. Joseph is not the natural father. Joseph is troubled and despondent. There is an old man talking to Joseph. The old man is Satan. Satan can appear in many forms. Here he is as an old man who is tempting Joseph and disturbing him. Satan is telling Joseph that virgin birth is impossible. He's telling Joseph that he's a fool if he believes this. This story comes to us from Holy Tradition. The sad Joseph shows us not only his personal predicament but the dilemma of all mankind, the difficulty of accepting that which is "beyond words or reason."

The tree, which is in the middle of the lower part of the icon, is a symbol of the Tree of Jesse. This tree refers to [Isaiah 11:1-2](#), "But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." King David was often mentioned as the son of Jesse and Jesus was from the House of David.

The Holy Icon of the Nativity reminds one to praise and glorify the Birth of Christ. The celebration of Christmas each year serves to remind each and every one of us that Christ came for you and me.

The Orthodox Celebration of the Feast of the Nativity

As with Pascha, or Easter, the Feast of the Nativity begins with a period of preparation. It is preceded by a fast corresponding to Lent and lasting for forty days. The fast begins on November 15.

On the Sundays immediately before December 25, special commemorations emphasize the link between the Old Covenant and the New. On December 20 the Forefeast of the Nativity is commemorated, and the daily liturgical texts are directed toward the Feast itself. On Christmas Eve, services include the Great or Royal Hours, the Great Vespers, and the Liturgy of Saint Basil.

On Christmas Day the service commemorates the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, the adoration of the Shepherds, and the arrival of the Wise Men with their gifts. The service held on this day is the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

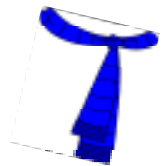
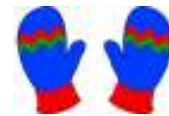
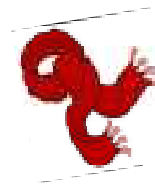
The days following Christmas are associated with the Theotokos and Joseph. December 26 is the Synaxis of the Mother of God, and the first Sunday after the Feast commemorates "Joseph the Betrothed." December 29 commemorates the Massacre of the Innocents, and January 1 the Circumcision of our Lord. The Nativity season ends on December 31, but the spirit of the festival extends to the celebration of Theophany (Epiphany), the feast commemorating the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River.



PTO Christmas Collection HATS, MITTENS, GLOVES, SCARVES AND SOCKS

"SHARE THE WARMTH"
Help Share God's Love . . .
Help to keep others toasty warm
this Christmas Season!!!

Please donate NEW
hats, mittens, gloves,
scarves and socks
for kids & adults!!!



Donation box located in Community Center
Deadline is December 15th

2019 Christmas Program
Greek School and Sunday School

The Students and Teachers
Cordially Invite You to Attend Their
Christmas Performance

Sunday, December 22, 2019
in the Community Center following Divine Liturgy



Reception to Follow Hosted by
Assumption Parent Teacher Organization

GOYA News

December 2019 . . .

For the month of October, Assumption GOYA decided to have an outing at Roger Williams Park during their Jack O' Lantern Spooktacular. At the park, pumpkins were showcased with beautiful carvings on them of different scenes. This was our first official get together as a GOYA this year, and we can't wait for the next get together to come. We are also selling our church Christmas Cards, along with giving a snowflake bookmark to those who make a purchase. We thank you, our community, for participating in this fundraiser during the holiday season.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellie Dafulas, Corresponding Secretary, Assumption GOYA

GOYAns had a spectacular time at the "Jack O' Lantern Spooktacular" which took place on October 19th at Roger Williams Park Zoo!!!



THE PANHELLENIC SCHOLARSHIP 2019/2020 FOR GREEK-AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

The PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation will again offer \$250,000 in scholarships to Greek-American undergraduates (\$20,000 awarded to Music and Arts Majors). Twenty awards of \$10,000 each will be based on academic merit and financial need. Twenty awards of \$2,500 each will be based solely on academic achievement. The scholarship application can be completed online. Applications from eligible college students will be accepted through **January 31, 2020**. The application and information are available at www.panhellenicsf.org.

Philoptochos

St. Barbara Philoptochos members hope that all parishioners had a Happy Thanksgiving . . .

Our Christmas party has been moved to Dec. 14th, at "Pub on the Won" in Seekonk, Massachusetts. In lieu of exchanging gifts, members were asked to make a donation to the Blackstone Valley Emergency Food Bank.

The annual Christmas visits made by Father Philip and members of our Visitation Committee to our parishioners who are unable to attend services will take place on December 20th and 21st. Please inform the Church Office if you know of any parishioners who are unable to come to Church due to illness and who would like a visit from Fr. Philip and the committee.

Ladies will be baking bread on December 16th and 17th. Bread pick-ups will take place on Wednesday, December 18th (10 AM to Noon, 5 to 7 PM); Thursday, December 19th (10 AM to Noon, 6 to 8 PM); and Saturday, December 21st (10 AM to 1 PM).

THERE WILL BE NO PICK-UPS ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22ND.

Future fundraisers were discussed at our last meeting which included discussion about a meatball dinner this winter.

We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!



Philoptochos Christmas Bread



Pick-Ups will be:

Wednesday, December 18th (10 AM to Noon, 5 to 7 PM)

Thursday, December 19th (10 AM to Noon, 6 to 8 PM)

Saturday, December 21st (10 AM to 1 PM)

NO PICK-UPS ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22nd

Visitation Committee

Christmas visits will be made by Fr. Philip and the Visitation Committee on December 20th and 21st. Please inform the Church Office if you know of any parishioners who are unable to come to church due to illness and who would like a visit from Fr. Philip and the committee.



In Memory of Dionysios "Dennis" Andrikopoulos

Kyria Panagiota Vasti, Principal of Assumption Greek School, Kyria Sophia Augoustakis, and all of the students of the Assumption Greek School would like to express their deepest sympathy regarding the passing away of Dennis Andrikopoulos to his wife Vasiliki Andrikopoulos as well as to their two sons, Tom and Andrew and their families. He will be missed by everyone and will always be remembered. Mr. Andrikopoulos was a generous supporter of the Assumption Greek School through the years.



IPADS NEEDED FOR OUR CHURCH

The new iPads are now on sale by Apple! If any parishioner plans to upgrade their iPad, we would be most grateful if you would consider donating your old iPad to our Church. We used borrowed ones for the festival, and it worked out very well, but we need to begin acquiring our own. The Church does not need the power of new ones, so your old units may be perfect! We can put two of them to immediate use as a credit card machine in the Church and as an audio visual tool in the Community Center.



Please contact the Church Office if you might be able to consider this. (Technical info: The models we really need are full size iPad 4s or newer, initially released November 2012. If it has the "lightning connector" - the same power connector that's on iPhones - then it's at least an iPad 4.) Thank you for your support!



Merry Christmas

Καλά Χριστούγεννα

and Happy New Year

to our Assumption Community from

Fr. Philip Zymaris & the Parish Council



STEWARDSHIP REMINDER

If you have forgotten to make your stewardship contribution,
please help the church meet its operating expenses by making your donation TODAY!!!

ΥΠΕΝΘΥΜΗΣΗ ΣΥΝΔΡΟΜΗΣ

Ἄν ἔχετε ξεχάσει νὰ στείλετε τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ σας γιὰ τὰ ἔξοδα καὶ τὴ σωστὴ λειτουργία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, παρακαλεῖστε νὰ κάνετε τὴν ἀπαραίτητη δωρεὰ σας ΣΗΜΕΡΑ!!!



AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

A121 Chapter, Pawtucket, RI - Established 1926

We Must Preserve the Legacy We Inherited! Your Voice Makes Us Stronger!

Promoting Hellenism in America

Since 1922

For nearly a 100 years, we have promoted the ancient Hellenic ideals of education, philanthropy, civic responsibility, family and individual excellence through community service and volunteerism.



We need you to join our AHEPA A121 (Pawtucket) Chapter!

We ask all of you to join and support your AHEPA Pawtucket chapter. You can get as much involved as you have time or desire. Please keep in mind, that just by becoming a member and through your yearly membership fee you help us to . . .

- Support AHEPA activities and publications
- Support our Chapter's activities and representation
- Give strength to our Pawtucket chapter though membership counts
- Provide academic and athletic scholarships
- Make our voice heard for things that matter
- Make a difference in every community and in the country as well

This is an invitation to everyone – we need all of you! Your opinion will always count, whether you are attending our meetings in person, or you are submitting your ideas via email, phone, text or personal conversation. ***For membership information and/or applications please see Yianni Apostolakis.*** For more information, please visit www.ahepa.org.



AHEPA HAPPENINGS | AROUND THE GLOBE

AHEPA Protests the Visit by Turkey's President Erdogan

Supreme President George Horiates and Global headquarters staff have been working tirelessly to prepare for the upcoming visit to the White House of President Erdogan of Turkey. On Wednesday, November 13, 2019 AHEPA will join with our friends in the Armenian Community through our association with the Armenian National Committee and are participating in a PROTEST in DC! AHEPA asked all our chapters and community to come to Washington where AHEPA will rally against the appearance of Erdogan. AHEPA called upon all Ahepans to attend a peaceful demonstration to encourage the West to stop turning a blind eye towards Turkey. Defend Hellenism now, it is needed more than ever. AHEPANS were asked to bring their Greek Flags and wear their AHEPA shirts on November 13!



5th District AHEPA Cancer Research Foundation Hosts 30th Annual Fall Gala

Edison, NJ – The Fifth District AHEPA Cancer Research Foundation hosted its 30th Annual Fall Gala on Saturday evening. AHEPANS and friends attended this great tradition that continues to be one of the most prominent of the year. Daughters of Penelope past Grand President Evelyn Tsiadis was the Master of Ceremonies who kicked off the evening by welcoming guests. The National Anthems of both Greece and the United States initiated the gala which was followed by the invocation by Father Paul Panos. Welcoming remarks were made by chairman Christos Prentzas. He introduced Daughters of Penelope Grand President

Celia Kachmarski who got cheers as she came to the podium. Her speech addressed the achievements of the Daughters of Penelope for the year and new chapters that had recently been launched.



IOCC®

Helping others help themselves

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES



You can help! All over the world, IOCC is working side by side with strong, resilient people who are working to improve their lives and their communities.



International Orthodox Christian Charities Launches Campaign for Children's Programs in Syria

IOCC-supported Dream Centers in Syria are safe spaces for play, learning and psychosocial support that help children and caregivers deal with trauma and difficult experiences.

Photo: GOPA-DERD.

Baltimore, Md. (October 15, 2019) – International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is launching a new fundraising campaign aiming to raise \$250,000 for programming that supports children and families who have survived trauma and tragedy in Syria.

Children are among the millions affected by the conflict in Syria including many displaced in their own country. Whether through exposure to violence or the loss of a home, family member, and stable daily life, children are especially susceptible to mental distress and uncertainty about the future. Working with Church partner the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development, IOCC has created safe spaces called Dream Centers across Syria to help address these needs.

Dream Centers are safe spaces for play, learning, and psychosocial support that help children (and their caregivers) deal with trauma and difficult experiences. Programming prioritizes unaccompanied children, those separated from caregivers, and orphans. Specialists work to help children become more resilient to trauma, and to emotionally reconnect with family and community through positive interactions and learning.

Four centers in various locations (urban and rural) have so far served thousands. Children ages 4 to 18 take part in 3-month courses of twice-weekly sessions and interactive activities like sports, theater, games, and art. The sessions aim to improve children's learning, memory, focus, and creative thinking, as well as to foster healthy emotional expression, communication, and responsibility. Children also gain body-boundary awareness and learn ways to protect themselves against harassment.

Here is How YOU Can Help More!

- Become a monthly donor to IOCC
- Send a donation to IOCC for a cause that touches your heart!
- Give a donation to Ioannis Apostolakis, **payable to IOCC**, for any occasion you would like to make a difference!

Help Us Provide For Those in Need!

And remember that 92 cents of every dollar you give goes to our humanitarian work. The other 8 cents is for administration and fundraising costs. Charity Navigator gives IOCC a 4-star rating (highest possible) for financial health, accountability and transparency. Plus, every dollar you give helps us secure \$7 more in support from governments, foundations, and other sources.

IOCC is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered \$580 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries. IOCC is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy. To learn more about IOCC, please visit our website at iocc.org

Yiannis Apostolakis

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 Ms. Kayla Alix
 Ms. Sacha Alix
 Dr. & Mrs. Vasili Amfilo
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Amoling
 Mr. & Mrs. Anastasios Andrikopoulos
 Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Andrikopoulos
 Mr. & Mrs. Elias Antonakos
 Mr. & Mrs. Ioannis Apostolakis
 Mr. & Mrs. Emmanouil Apostolidis
 The Augoustakis Family
 Mrs. Sophia Balamas
 Mr. & Mrs. Craig Barone
 Mr. Craig Barone, Jr.
 Ms. Elaine Bassis
 Mr. Arthur Bassis
 Mr. & Mrs. James Belliveau
 Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Bianchi
 Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Bitsakis
 Mr. & Mrs. Kosta Bitsis
 Mr. & Mrs. Fred Boccelli
 Ms. Arestea (Karalis) Boulay
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 Ms. Maria Anna Chrisidis
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 Mr. & Mrs. John Dafulas
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 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Gallo
 Mrs. Sophie Ganosel

Mr. & Mrs. William Gaza
 Rev. Fr. & Presbyteria Evangelos Georgiadis
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 Mr. Vasilios Haseotes
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 Mrs. Artemis Michelarakis
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 Ms. Gina Taktikos
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 Mrs. Alexandra Whitmore
 Mrs. Joanne Wright
 Mrs. Mary Xifaras
 Mr. & Mrs. Louis Xifaras
 Mr. & Mrs. John Zervas
 Dr. Christopher A. Zoto

Many Thanks for your Thanksgiving Offerings

Mr. Andre Alix
 Dr. & Mrs. Vasili Amfilo
 Ms. Helen Buco
 Mr & Mrs. George Fackos
 Mr. Steven Fackos
 Mr & Mrs. Richard Forest
 Mr & Mrs. William Gaza
 Ms. Barbara Kiras
 Mr & Mrs. Roger Lemire
 Mrs. Evanne (Papas) Mirabile
 Mr & Mrs. Stephen Mudge
 Mrs. Harriet Pappas
 Ms. Karen Pappas
 Mrs. Marion Pollock
 The Sioras Family
 Mrs. Emily Soukas
 Mrs. Pashalia Strekouras
 Mrs. Joanne Wright



Adoration of the Magi and Stewardship

Regarding the events of the Birth of Christ, we recall the visit of the Wise Men to the Christ Child. Seeking the Newborn King, they offer gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Their offering reminds the faithful that we too must present our gifts to the Lord. The gifts we offer through good stewardship are our time, talents, and treasure. The Magi traveled a great distance to meet the newborn King. Following the Star of Bethlehem, they were guided to prostrate themselves before the God incarnate. They understood what it meant to present their very best to the Lord. We must continue to let the star guide us in acts of Christian stewardship. What cause can possibly be more worthy than to present ourselves to God so that the sacred mission of His Church might be fulfilled? We should not wait for the Church to ask for our support. We all must step forward voluntarily to meet the Lord and to present ourselves to Him by the giving of our time, talents, and treasure.



Much Appreciation

We would like to give our thanks to the following parishioners for their dedication each month when they volunteer to fold and label the monthly newsletter. It is with much gratitude and appreciation that we express our heartfelt thanks to: Penelope Vartanian, Marion Manickas, Tina Demopulos, Marion Pollock, Pat Gaza, Barbara Kiras, Eleni Dafulas, Gina Taktikos, Harriet Pappas, Betty Missirlis, and Charikleia Campos.



CAR NEEDED

Our Parishioner, Marie Walsh, Founder and President of the Alzheimer's CURE Foundation (www.alzCURE.org), is in need of a corporate car for the organization. If anyone has a car that they no longer need, or knows of someone who does, and would be willing to donate it to the Alzheimer's CURE Foundation, please contact Marie directly at 401-473-7019. The age of the car is irrelevant as long as it is safe and in excellent working condition. Many thanks in advance!

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Church Grounds

Help beautify our church grounds. Donations towards our church grounds are always much appreciated. Please bring any donations to the Church Office so that our grounds will remain beautiful year round. Many thanks to Roula Vellopoulos, Nick Vellopoulos, and Ioanna Wright who are our church gardeners spending endless hours planting, watering, and trimming our beautiful flowers and shrubs surrounding our premises.



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