



Religious Education Newsletter

Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton
Українська Католицька Едмонтонська Єпархія

January – February 2011



ХРИСТОС РАЖДАЄТЬСЯ!

CHRIST IS BORN!

СЛАВИТЕ ЙОГО!

LET US GLORIFY HIM!



By the time you read this, Christmas and the holidays will be somewhat of a memory. The trees will have been taken down and placed in the trash or placed back in their boxes to lie dormant for another year. Gifts will have been opened and wrong sizes or unwanted gifts returned for cash or credit.

So now is a good time to ask...was it all worth it? Did all the hours of preparation pay off? Did you really enjoy the holidays or did you get caught up in the whole rush of things, the shopping, the crowds, the stress of making sure that you purchased the perfect gift? Did you set your expectations too high? Did you become a better person or just a poorer one? Is your stomach and your wallet now beginning to recover? Was it a big letdown?

OR...

Did you take the time to really put your faith into perspective? Did you take the time to truly reflect on the true meaning of Christmas? Did you greet the Christ Child? Did you find happiness in the peace and joy that only Christ can give rather than in the superficial things of the season—the whole commercialism of Christmas? Did you become a better person by sharing your happiness with others and by giving your weaknesses to Christ through confession? Would you do it all again the same way given the chance?

If any of this rings true, then maybe it is time to truly learn from these mistakes and re-examine what real joy, peace and happiness of Christmas and our lives is all about.. So, with a brand new year ahead of us, it is a great time to refocus and to re-examine our shortcomings and misgivings of the past year. It is also a perfect time to prepare for a new and fulfilled spiritual beginning...a new beginning with God.

As your thoughts ponder on your New Year's resolutions—let yourself rely on God's strength to help you. If God is the centre of your resolution then it has a chance for success—that is—depending on your commitment to it. If it is God's will for something to be fulfilled, He will enable you to fulfill it.

May the Lord continue to bless each and every one of you and may the New Year bring joy, peace and happiness each moment of each day.

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Happy New Year



З Новом Роком



The Feast of Theophany / Богоявлення Господнє

The Feast of Theophany (*Bohoyavlennia*), also called the Feast of Jordan, is celebrated each year on January 06/19. It commemorates Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan and the divine revelation of the Most Holy Trinity.

At the Baptism of Christ, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—were made manifest. Thus, the name of the Feast is Theophany, meaning *appearance of God*.

When Jesus was 30 years old, He came to the River Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist, who was the last of a long line of prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. This was the beginning of His official dedication to His Divine Mission.

When Jesus stepped into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. The Bible records that the Spirit descended like a dove and alighted on Him and the voice of God in Heaven said, *"This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased."* St. John the Baptist also bore witness and spoke, *"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).* The baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan by John the Baptist serves

to explain the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father spoke from Heaven, Christ the Son was baptized, and the Holy Spirit descended on the Son in the form of a dove.

Christ is Baptized! In the Jordan!



Христос Хрестився! У Йордані!

Originally, the baptism of Christ and the birth of Christ were celebrated together because they both shared the same meaning: God revealing Himself, once as a child, and once at His baptism. It was

not until the 4th century that the Church decided to separate these feast days. Also, from ancient times this Feast was called the *Day of Illumination* and the *Feast of Lights*, since God is Light and has appeared to illuminate "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (*Mt 4:16*), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

The celebration of the Feast of Theophany reminds us of our Baptism, or rebirth in Christ. Baptism was the first sacrament we received when we became members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The main element of this feast is the Great Blessing of Water (see page 4.) The priest blesses the water in a special service at the end of Divine Liturgy. Special hymns are sung including hymns which are heard at Baptisms. After the liturgy, the priest sprinkles all the people in the church with blessed water and offers water, the symbol of life, to the faithful in containers to take home to bless their homes or to save for times of trouble and illness.† (goarch.org/Our Faith -Byz. Cat. For Adults/A Byzantine Rite Liturgical Year)

NO ONE IS PERFECT...
THAT'S WHY PENCILS
HAVE ERASERS.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Many of us believe
that wrongs aren't wrong
if they're done by nice people
like ourselves.

Author Unknown

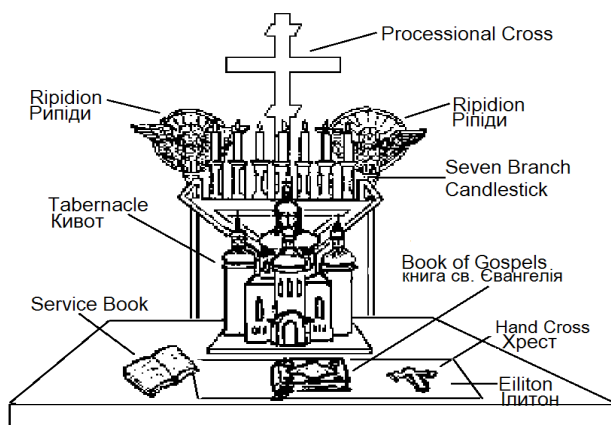
SYMBOLISM

In previous issues of our newsletter, many of the written articles mentioned had some relationship with symbolism. What is symbolism? The word *symbol* is derived from the Greek words *syn* and *balō*, which means to bring two realities together and place them side by side. The signs and symbols used in the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the Eastern Byzantine Rite are used to point the faithful beyond themselves and into the spiritual world. They are not keepsakes or mementoes, nor are they based on superstition. They are based on all five of our senses. They can be actions, pictures, words, names or objects. Basically, symbolism is used to remind people of the presence of God in their lives, and reflect something of the beliefs Ukrainian Catholics hold. They bring into the human world the world of God.†

The Sanctuary Symbolism and Meaning

The Holy Altar Table & Altar Covers

In the center of the sanctuary is the Holy Table or Altar, the Lord's banquet table, to which all are called. It is upon this Holy Table where the unbloody Sacrifice, the consecration of the Eucharist, takes place. The Altar Table is covered with two cloths. The first cover is called the Antimension. It is a linen cloth depicting the Entombment of Christ (similar to the Plashchanytsia.) Sewn into it are the relics of a saint. It is consecrated by the Bishop and remains permanently on the Holy Table as the very Body of our Lord. The Antimension is absolutely necessary for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, that is, unless the Holy Altar itself has been consecrated by the Bishop. The second covering is the Eiliton. It too, is a rectangular piece of linen on which the paten and chalice rest during the liturgy. The proskomedion may also bear an Eiliton.

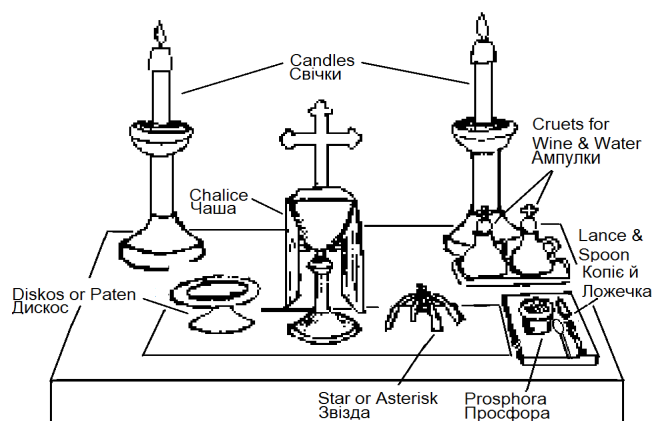


On the Holy Table is the Book of Gospels and Holy Gifts used during the Divine Liturgy. In the center of the table stands the Tabernacle, usually a replica of a church, containing the reserved Eucharist (symbolic of the Ark of the New Covenant).

Placed behind the Tabernacle is a seven-branched candlestick (recalling the menorah of the Jewish Temple), a processional cross, and the *ripidia*, fans in the image of six-winged seraphim that were once used to fan the Holy Gifts, and which accompany the cross in processions.

The Prothesis and Diakonikon

On the North side of the sanctuary is the *Prothesis*, the Table of Preparation (also called the Table of Oblation), where the Eucharistic Gifts are prepared prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. On the Prothesis is a cross, candles, the Holy Gifts of bread (proskophora) and wine, and the sacred vessels and instruments: the diskos (paten), chalice, star or asterisk (two arched bands of gold placed over the diskos to keep the chalice veil from touching the Eucharist), a golden spoon and the Holy Lance (a small knife in the shape of a spear, used to cut up the proskophora and symbolic of the lance that pierced the side of Christ as He hung on the Cross). On the back wall of the Prothesis is traditionally found the icon of the Nativity, reminding us that Christ is the sacrificial lamb that is offered "in behalf of all and for all."



Continued on page 9...

The Great Blessing of Water *Vodokhreshcha* *Bodoxpeua*

Water—what an amazing gift! Something that we often take for granted—we use it lavishly—we use it for bathing, laundry, dishwashing, watering our plants and so on—but we only need about two litres a day for drinking to survive.

So, what is the significance of the symbolism of water during Theophany and the Feast of Jordan? Why do we use water as a means of grace? Water is the most beautiful of the four elements of the cosmos. We rise from the waters of baptism into a new life, born again of water and the Spirit. Water has been used as symbol for Jesus, “*whoever drinks of the water I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*” (John 4:13-14) Once our physical needs are met, our spiritual thirst remains. We thirst for knowledge, we thirst for meaning, we thirst to know who we are. We thirst to know God. If we cannot answer these questions, our inner thirst grows painful.

Introduced in the fourth century, the Great Blessing of Water, in Ukrainian called *Vodokhreshch*, is a magnificent ritual that is carried out twice: first on the vigil of the Feast (the eve of Theophany) and then on the feast day itself (today, it is usually done once.) A container of water, which stands for the beautiful world of God’s original creation and ultimate glorification by Christ in the Kingdom of God, is placed on a low table in front of the Tetrapod surrounded by candles and flowers. It begins with the singing of special hymns and the incensing of the water, then follows a ceremony which includes:

- † The immersion of the lighted trident candle (*trojka*): *Repeated three times by making a sign of the cross each time. During the rite, the priest immerses the lighted trident candle in the waters and prays "Great are You, O Lord, and Wonderful are Your works..." The immersion of the lighted candles signifies the remission of sins in Baptism.*
- † Breathing on the waters: *Repeated three times in the form of a cross, the priest invokes: "O King and Lover of mankind come down through the descent of the Holy Spirit and sanctify this water."*

- † The immersion of the priest’s right hand: *Repeated three times by tracing the sign of the cross in the water and praying "O Master, sanctify this water today by Your Holy Spirit."*

At the conclusion of this ceremony, the priest immerses the hand cross into the water during the singing of the Troparion of the Feast. He then sprinkles the people and the church with the newly-blessed water. Following the celebration, the faithful are invited to approach and drink some of the holy water and then fill their containers. They take the water home for various purposes such as; to bless the sick, to bless people on special occasions (anniversaries, etc), to avert calamities such as fire and inclement weather.



At the traditional Supper on the Eve of Theophany (*Shchedryj Vechir*), the faithful drink this water. After the ceremonies in church and the following weeks, the priest visits the homes of the faithful to bless them with holy water. We should value the efficacy of this holy water, for if we have faith and devotion, the holy water confers actual graces, restrains the power of the devil and remits venial sins. You can partake of the blessed water whenever you feel you have a need for the Lord’s presence as it represents the Lord’s healing and loving presence always.†





Truths For Living

William Arthur Ward

- The more generous we are, the more joyous we become.
- The more cooperative we are, the more valuable we become.
- The more enthusiastic we are, the more productive we become.
- The more serving we are, the more prosperous we become.
- The more outgoing we are, the more helpful we become.
- The more curious we are, the more creative we become.
- The more patient we are, the more understanding we become.
- The more persistent we are, the more successful we become.



The Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ

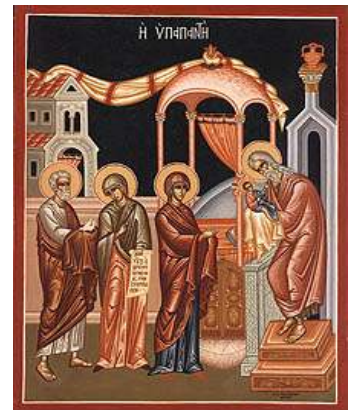
Стрімення

The Christmas cycle of feast days concludes with the feast of the Presentation of our Lord on February 2/15, the 40th day after the Nativity of Christ. This feast is closely connected with the Nativity of our Lord, for just as Christ’s divinity was revealed at His birth, so it is also manifested at His presentation in the Temple.

This story is told in Luke 2:22-40. The law of Moses prescribed that every woman who gave birth to a male child was excluded from the temple for 40 days, for during that time she was regarded as impure. These 40 days were called “days of purification.” When this period of purification ended, the mother of the newly born child would go to the temple and offer a year old lamb as a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtle dove, while a poor woman had to offer a pair of pigeons or turtle doves. As Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs, they took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. Since they were not wealthy, they took two turtle-doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. Simeon was promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Saviour of the world with his own eyes. The promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled and Simeon was led to the temple on this day. When he saw the Infant he knew at once that the child was the promised Messiah. Simeon was so happy when he held baby Jesus in his arms.

He praised God saying...

“Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel.”



Simeon said he could now die in peace—he had seen the Saviour. Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the Temple worshiping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Christ Child she praised God and spoke of Him to all who were awaiting the Messiah. After Jesus was presented in the Temple, the family returned to Galilee to the town of Nazareth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong, and was filled with wisdom. (www.goarch.org)

On the Feast of the Presentation, we bless candles for use all year long. This is to remind us that Christ is the “Light that enlightens all mankind — He is the Light of the World.” He guides us in the way we should live. He helps us overcome evil and gives us understanding of the ways of the Father. This is also the reason for lighting candles in Church.†

TAKE A BREAK...



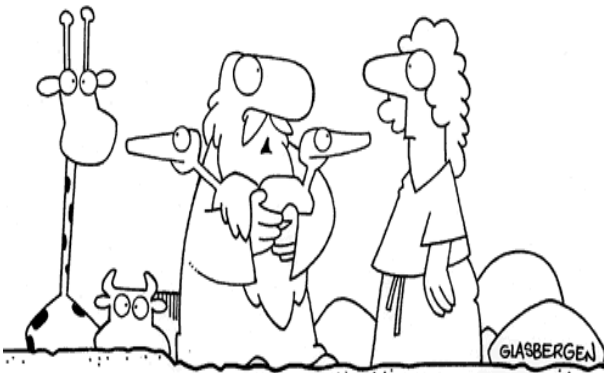
Thanks to Julie Seeto 11-14-2002

WHY DON'T YOU STOP WONDERING WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD AND READ THE MANUAL

Consider how hard it is to change yourself and you'll understand what little chance you have in trying to change others.

Jacob M. Braude

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"It's going to rain for 40 days and nights, so God told me to put two of every animal on the ark. And then He gave me something called 'Nintendo' to help pass the time."

Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.

Raymond Lindquist



EXERCISES WE CAN DO WITHOUT

1. Jumping on the bandwagon
2. Wading through paperwork
3. Running around in circles
4. Pushing your luck
5. Spinning your wheels
6. Adding fuel to the fire
7. Beating your head against the wall
8. Climbing the walls
9. Beating your own drum
10. Dragging your heels
11. Jumping to conclusions
12. Grasping at straws
13. Fishing for compliments
14. Throwing your weight around
15. Passing the buck

WHEW!



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Thanks to Mikel Rice (See Psalms 68:19) 08-17-2004

AND THIS IS WHERE WE KEEP THE BAGGAGE THAT PEOPLE HAVE GIVEN OVER TO GOD



Candles and Their Symbolism



Candles play a major role in our Liturgical Rite. We use candles at Easter, candles at Christmas, candles at Theophany, candles at baptism, candles at weddings, candles on the Altar table, candles before icons, candles during processions, candles everywhere. So why do we use candles and what is their significance?

Candles, lamps, light and flames represent the visible presence of God as the **Light of the World**. To understand the meaning of candles in our worship, we must look to the Bible where God is so often described in terms of fire and light.

Light was the first thing God created (Genesis 1:3). God appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). He appeared to the Israelites as a pillar of fire to guide them to the Promised Land (Exodus 13:21-22). The eternal flame of God's presence was to be lit in the Temple in Jerusalem at all times.

Light also represents the direction and guidance of God: The light of God's countenance is an expression of His blessing (Psalm 89:15). God's Word is a lamp to the feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). The Lord is a lamp, turning darkness into light (2 Samuel 22). The Messiah was to be a light to the nations, bringing salvation to them (Isaiah 49:6 & Luke 2:32). The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? (Psalm 27:1).

Jesus, too, is described in terms of light: Jesus called his followers the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). Jesus is the True Light that shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it" (John 1:5) and Jesus Himself said, "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:12).

The candle also stands for the Church of the living God, for in it, Christ enlightens the faithful through evangelization in His Church. For individual Christians, the candle's flame represents the faith that makes us "*Children of the Light*." A lighted candle gives off heat and its warmth and heat show us the "*Fiery Tongues*," the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which "*Do not consume, but enlighten*."

In many churches, when the priest reads the Gospel, Lectors, Acolytes, Children of Mary or parishioners stand with lighted candles on either side. The lighted candles remind us of Christ's Gospel—The Holy Bible, the Word of God which dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin. "***The light shines in the darkness and darkness does not overcome it.***" (John 1, 5)

Candles also signify Christian self-sacrifice. As the burning taper consumes itself, so should the Christian burn up his or her energies in serving God and his neighbor. Candle stands which are usually found at the front of the church hold votive candles. These votive candles may be lit by the faithful to pray for themselves or for someone in need, such as health or comfort, to honour a saint or to commemorate a deceased loved one. The word "votive" means an offering or dedication in accordance with a vow.

The candle is usually made of pure beeswax and so should our hearts be pure. The wick represents the soul of Christ, Our Lord, and the flame represents His Divinity—the fact that He is God.

*Lord,
Help us not just to light candles in worship
but also be candles lit by the Holy Spirit,
spreading, wherever we go,
the warmth of Your love and the light of Your Truth.
Amen.*

Continued on page 9...





Why Bless Homes?

The blessing of homes constitutes an *invocative blessing*, meaning that by his prayer and by the sprinkling of Holy Water the priest *invokes* God's blessings and protection upon the home and those living in it. We bless homes for many reasons:

- † to reveal the home as what God had created it to be, a way to Heaven
- † to rid the home of every evil
- † to show that the family is a small Church unit in Christ
- † to consecrate the home and all activity in it to God
- † to fill the home and all who live in it with the fullness of God



Traditionally, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany. By sanctifying our homes we extend the grace of God to our individual dwellings.

Just as our souls, so also our homes become tainted by the sins of those living in them and consequently lose God's protective power. We cleanse our souls of sins at least once a year and the church is blessed with the newly blessed water every year, so should our homes be sanctified with Holy Water to invoke God's blessings and protection on it and its inhabitants. As we renew the insurance on our home every year, so we should renew our insurance of God's protection and His blessing which is of greater importance and more effective.

What should we do during a home blessing?

As we welcome our priest during the holy season of Theophany to bless our home, let us be mindful that he is bringing to us the "blessing of the Jordan," and that unless God protects and blesses our home, we "labour in vain." (Ps. 12 7:1)

Each family is considered a small church and the family table is the home altar. When the priest comes, have as many family members there as possible. If you do not have an icon corner, ensure that you set up a place for prayer either at the kitchen or dining table. On the table include an icon and a lit candle. You may also include anything that you may want to have blessed (i.e. icon, cross, personal item, etc.) Make sure that the lights are on in every room. The priest will begin the blessing at the icon corner or table. If you have children, they may lead the priest, while holding a candle, to each room in the house.

This is also a wonderful time for you and your priest to visit and to get to know each other better.†

Things To Believe In...

- ❖ *Believe in yourself; you are God's creation.*
- ❖ *Believe in your job; honest work is a form of worship.*
- ❖ *Believe in the present; every minute contains an opportunity to serve God.*
- ❖ *Believe in your family; create harmony and togetherness by working together.*
- ❖ *Believe in your neighbour; friends are an important ingredient in a happy life.*
- ❖ *Believe in God's promise; He means it when He says, "I am with you always."*
- ❖ *Believe in God's mercy; since God forgives you, you can forgive yourself and try again tomorrow.*



Continued from page 3...

On the South side of the sanctuary is the *Diaconicon*, the Deacon's Table. This is where other liturgical items are stored, specifically the liturgical books. The diaconicon is also referred to as the sacristy where the deacon's, lector's or altar boys would vest.

The Bishop's Throne

At the back of the sanctuary is an elaborate chair/throne that is set aside for the Bishop. Oftentimes, the icon of Christ, the High Priest, is positioned on the back of the throne as the Bishop is understood to be our symbolic image of Christ, the High Priest, in the Church. The throne is meant to have a place of prominence in the Church, symbolically representing the grand responsibility of the bishop within the life of the Church.

The Pulpit

Christ gave His Apostles the command to go forth and preach to all nations. With vigor His Apostles went out into the world to share the Good News. They preached in homes, in caves, in catacombs, in public squares, and there was not a single agape meal (later developing into the Divine Liturgy) that was celebrated without time set aside for educating the faithful.

As Christians began to build churches, a special place was designated from which the homily could be preached and the Gospel could be read. This place was called the *ambo*, or pulpit. It was a place erected in the middle of the church to which the deacon or priest would ascend via a stairway. Later on in the church's development the pulpit

was attached to a column on the north side of the church. Now, as we see today, the pulpit is set-up on the *solea*, in front of the Iconostasis.

But why an elevated place from which to preach and educate the faithful? Practically, it insured that the priest could be seen and heard throughout the church. Symbolically, the preacher would stand upon the stone rolled away from the tomb (the Sanctuary being the tomb) as did the angel of the Lord, who preached the Good News to the women.

Although we find ourselves physically in different places in the Church structure, it is together, with one voice, and in one spirit that the clergy, the laity, the saints, and the hosts of angels worship the Lord in His Holy House.†



Candles continued...

At the Presentation of Our Lord in the temple, St. Simeon held Jesus in his arms and proclaimed that **"Jesus is the light that enlightens every person that comes into this world."** He said, "Now, O Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace for my eyes have seen Your salvation - A revealing light to the Gentiles." It has become a custom in many of our Churches to bless candles on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord to remind us that Christ is the Light of the World. Blessing candles is done during the Matins Service or sometimes incorporated into the Divine Liturgy.

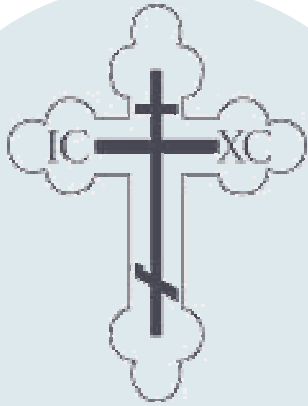
Lighting candles:

- ☪ reminds us the God is the `Light of the World.`
- ☪ expresses our belief that Jesus is the Light of the World and that as His disciples, we are called daily to reflect His light in our lives.
- ☪ is a Christian way to prepare the soul for a life of dedication and to offer the best of what one has to God.†

Candles can also be used:

- ☪ during Christmas Eve Holy Supper.
- ☪ during the blessing of a home with Holy Water.
- ☪ during the blessing of our Easter baskets.
- ☪ for birthdays, weddings and anniversaries.
- ☪ during a storm or other perils that may frighten us. We do this with faith and hope that God would protect us from all danger and misfortune.
- ☪ Every family should have a blessed candle at home so they may be a true inspiration to all of us.

*May Christ, Our Lord,
Who is the true Light of the world
and whom these candles represent,
grant you peace, protection and all the necessary
graces you need in this life and life everlasting.*



Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton

Українська Католицька Едмонтонська Єпархія

Religious Education,
Chancery Office

9645 -108 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5H 1A3

Phone: 780-425-9907

Fax: 780-425-2330

Email:

education@edmontoneparchy.com

Website:

www.edmontoneparchy.com

Editor: Larysa Durda

ldurda@shaw.ca

HOW TRUE...

Living on Earth is expensive, but it does include a free trip around the sun.

Birthdays are good for you -the more you have the longer you live.

Ever notice that the people who are late are often so much jollier than the people who have to wait for them.

If ignorance is bliss, why aren't more people happy?

Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside of us.

You may be only one person in the world, but you may also be the world to one person.

Some mistakes are too much fun to only make once.

Don't cry because its over; smile because it happened.

We could learn a lot from crayons: some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, some have weird names, and all are different colors, but they all have to learn to live in the same box.

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.

A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.

Happiness comes through doors you didn't even know you left open.

Oh yeah, don't forget about the crayons!



I look forward to hearing your comments about this newsletter. If you have any questions or if you would like to contribute an article please contact either myself or Gloria Green, Religious Education Director. I will endeavour to explain our beautiful Byzantine Rite within our Ukrainian Catholic Church. If you would like to know more about a certain topic, please let us know — because if you are curious about something, chances are that someone else is too. You can contact either of us at ldurda@shaw.ca or education@edmontoneparchy.com.

Excerpts from these articles have been taken from the following sources: A Byzantine Rite, Liturgical Year, Julian J. Katrij; Sacred Symbols, Anthony Coniaris; A Commentary on the Byzantine Divine Liturgy, Meletius Solovey, OSBM; Our Faith, A Byzantine Catechism For Adults, Casimir Kucharek; The Incarnate God: Liturgics, Holy Things, J. Skwarok, O.S.B.M.; The Byzantine Ukrainian Rite; The Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, Catherine Aslanoff.