



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

Bulletin for Sunday, December 26, 2021

Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine

Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against

racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

Members of our Parish Council are:

Joseph Barbera - Council Member at Large
Susan Davis- Council Member at Large
Carolyn Neiss - President
Marlene Melesko - Vice President
Susan Egan - Treasurer
Dn Timothy Skuby - Secretary

Pastoral Care - General Information

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

Announcements

In Anticipation of Theophany and the Great Blessing of Water

We will do the Great Blessing of water at Liturgy on January 6th. Holy water will be available for home use there after. Weather permitting, we will go to LIS and bless these waters after Liturgy on January 9th.

I would also like to resume house blessings. If you would like your house blessed, please let me know a date and time that works for you.

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Archpriest Dennis,
Archpriest Michael,
Deacon Timothy, Evelyn,
Katheryn, Anne, Aaron,
Veronica, Richard,
Nancy, Susanne, Carol,
Alexander, Gail, Kelley,
Nina, Ellen, Maureen,
Elizabeth, Christopher,
Joshua, Jennifer, Petra,
Olivia, Jessica, Sean,
Sarah, Justin, Dayna and
Maria.

Please pray for our catecumens: Daniel,
Gregory and David.

Many Years! to SubDn Joseph on the occasion
of his Name's Day.

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- Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;
 - All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalize, those who have no one to pray for them;
 - All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.
 - All those who have perished due to hatred, intolerance and pestilence; all those departed this life in the hope

- of the Resurrection.

Second Day of the Feast of the Nativity .
 Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos . Sunday
 after Nativity. Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph
 the Betrothed, David the King, and James the
 Brother of the Lord. Hieromartyr Euthymius,
 Bishop of Sardis (ca. 840). Ven. Constantine of
 Synnada (8th c.). Ven. Evaristus of the Studion
 Monastery (9th c.). Saint Nikódēmos the
 Sanctified of Tismana, Romania (Macedonia—
 1406). Hieromartyr Constantine the Russian
 of Lavra on Mt. Athos (Mt. Athos—1743).

Parish Calendar

Schedule of Services and Events

December 26, 2021 to January 3, 2022

DECEMBER

Sunday, December 26

Sunday after Nativity
 9:15AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, December 27

Stephen, Archdeacon & First Martyr
 8:30AM Akathist to St Stephen

Tuesday, December 28

20,000 Martyrs burned in Nicomedia
 8:30AM Akathist to Righteous Joseph

Wednesday, December 29

14,000 infants (Holy Innocents) slain by
 Herod in Bethlehem
 8:30AM Akathist to Prophet David

Thursday, December 30

Anysia the Virgin-martyr of Thessaloniki
 8:30AM Daily Matins

Friday, December 31

Apodosis of the Nativity of Our Lord and
 Savior, Jesus Christ
 5:30PM Service of Thanksgiving

JANUARY

Saturday, January 1

Circumcision of Our Lord and Savior Jesus
 Christ
 5:30PM Great Vespers with Litya

Sunday, January 2

Sunday before Epiphany
 9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, January 3

Forefeast of the Theophany of Our Lord and
 Saviour Jesus Christ

Saints and Feasts

December 26

Sunday after Nativity

On the Sunday that falls on or immediately
 after the twenty-sixth of this month, we make
 commemoration of Saints Joseph, the
 Betrothed of the Virgin; David, the Prophet
 and King; and James, the Brother of God.
 When there is no Sunday within this period,
 we celebrate this commemoration on the 26th.

Saint Joseph (whose name means "one who increases") was the son of Jacob, and the son-in-law - and hence, as it were, the son - of Eli (who was also called Eliakim or Joachim), who was the father of Mary the Virgin (Matt. 1:16; Luke 3:23). He was of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, an inhabitant of Nazareth, a carpenter by Trade, and advanced in age when, by God's good will, he was betrothed to the Virgin, that he might minister to the great mystery of God's dispensation in the flesh by protecting her, providing for her, and being known as her husband so that she, being a virgin, would not suffer reproach when she was found to be with child. Joseph had been married before his betrothal to our Lady; they who are called Jesus' "brethren and sisters" (Matt. 13:55-56) are the children of Joseph by his first marriage. From Scripture, we know that Saint Joseph lived at least until the Twelfth year after the birth of Christ (Luke 2:41-52); according to the tradition of the Fathers, he reposed before the beginning of the public ministry of Christ.

The child of God and ancestor of God, David, the great Prophet after Moses, sprang from the tribe of Judah. He was the son of Jesse, and was born in Bethlehem (whence it is called the City of David), in the year 1085 before Christ. While yet a youth, at the command of God he was anointed secretly by the Prophet Samuel to be the second King of the Israelites, while Saul - who had already been deprived of divine grace - was yet living. In the thirtieth year of his life, when Saul had been slain in battle, David was raised to the dignity of King, first, by his own tribe, and then by all

the Israelite people, and he reigned for forty years. Having lived seventy years, he reposed in 1015 before Christ, having proclaimed beforehand that his son Solomon was to be the successor to the throne.

The sacred history has recorded not only the grace of the Spirit that dwelt in him from his youth, his heroic exploits in war, and his great piety towards God, but also his transgressions and failings as a man. Yet his repentance was greater than his transgressions, and his love for God fervent and exemplary; so highly did God honour this man, that when his son Solomon sinned, the Lord told him that He would not rend the kingdom in his lifetime "for David thy father's sake" (III Kings 12:12). Of The Kings of Israel, Jesus the Son of Sirach testifies, "All, except David and Hezekias and Josias, were defective" (Ecclus. 49:4). The name David means "beloved."

His melodious Psalter is the foundation of all the services of the Church; there is not one service that is not filled with Psalms and psalmic verses. It was the means whereby old Israel praised God, and was used by the Apostles and the Lord Himself. It is so imbued with the spirit of prayer that the monastic fathers of all ages have used it as their trainer and teacher for their inner life of converse with God. Besides eloquently portraying every state and emotion of the soul before her Maker, the Psalter is filled with prophecies of the coming of Christ. It foretells His Incarnation, "He bowed the heavens and came down" (Psalm 17:9), His Baptism in the Jordan, "The waters saw Thee, O God,

The waters saw Thee and were afraid" (76:15), His Crucifixion in its details, "They have pierced My hands and My feet They have parted My garments amongst themselves, and for My vesture have they cast lots" (21:16, 18). "For My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (68:26), His descent into Hades, "For Thou wilt not abandon My soul in Hades, nor wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption" (15:10) and Resurrection, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered" (67:1). His Ascension, "God is gone up in jubilation" (46:5), and so forth.

As for James, the Brother of God, see October 23.

December 26

Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos

This Synaxis - which is to say, our coming together to glorify the Theotokos - is celebrated especially in her honour because she gave birth supernaturally to the Son and Word Of God, and thus became the instrument of the salvation of mankind.

December 27

Stephen, Archdeacon & First Martyr

Saint Stephen was a Jew, by race, and, as some say, a disciple of Gamaliel, the teacher of the Law mentioned in Acts 5:34 and 22:3. He was the first of the seven deacons whom the Apostles established in Jerusalem to care for the poor, and to distribute alms

to them. Being a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, he performed great signs and wonders among the people. While disputing with the Jews concerning Jesus, and wisely refuting their every contradiction, so that no one was able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit whereby he spake, he was slandered as a blasphemer and was dragged off to the Sanhedrin of the elders. There with boldness he proved from the divine Scriptures the coming of the Just One (Jesus), of Whom they had become the betrayers and murderers, and he reproved their faithless and hardheartedness. And finally, gazing into Heaven and beholding the divine glory, he said: "Lo, I see the Heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." But when they heard this, they stopped up their ears, and with anger cast him out of the city and stoned him, while he was calling out and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then, imitating the long-suffering of the Master, he bent his knees and prayed in a loud voice for them that were stoning him, and he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," And saying this, he fell asleep (Acts 6, 7), thus becoming the first among the Martyrs of the Church of Christ.

December 28

20,000 Martyrs burned in Nicomedia

All these Saints, some 20,000 in number, were burned alive in the year 303, while they were gathered in church. This came to pass during the reign of Diocletian and Maximian. According to the Synaxarion, this took place on the day of Christ's Nativity.

Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. VIII, 6) says that, of the Christians then living in Nicomedia, all were slain by imperial decree - some by the sword, and others by fire, and that, because of their divine and inexpressible ardour, both men and women cast themselves into the fire. Besides those burned in church. the following, who were slain in the same Persecution, are commemorated today. Indus, Gorgonius, and Peter were cast into the sea; Glycerius the Presbyter and Mardonius were burned; Dorotheus the Prefect and Zeno were beheaded; Theophilus the Deacon was stoned; Mygdonius was buried alive; and Domna, who had been a priestess of the idols, believed in Christ, and was baptized, was beheaded and cast into the fire. See also the account of Saint Anthimus on September 3.

December 29

14,000 infants (Holy Innocents) slain by Herod in Bethlehem

The infant-slaying Herod mentioned here is the same one that ruled at the time of Christ's Nativity. In those days, certain Magi, who were wise and noble men, perhaps even kings, set forth from the East, and came to Jerusalem, seeking the King of the Jews, Who had been born; and they said that in the East, where their homeland was, an unusual and strange star had appeared two years before, which, according to an ancient oracle (Num 24:17), was to signify the birth of some great king of the Jews. "For we have seen His star in the east," they said, "and have come to worship Him" (Matt. 2:2). Hearing these things, Herod

was troubled, and the whole city together with him. Then, having inquired and been informed by the high priests and scribes of the people that, according to the prophecies, Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, he sent the Magi thither and ordered them that, when they would find the Child, to inform him, so that he also - as he affirmed - might go and worship Him. But the Magi, after they had worshipped, departed by another way to their own country by a divine command. Then Herod was wroth and sent men to slay all the infants of Bethlehem and the parts round about, from two years old and under, thinking that with them he would also certainly slay the King Who had been born. But this vain man who fought against God was mocked, since Jesus the Child, with Mary His Mother, under the protection of Joseph the Betrothed, fled into Egypt at the command of an Angel. As for those innocent infants, they became the first Martyrs slain in behalf of Christ. But their blood-thirsty executioner, the persecutor of Christ, came down with dropsy after a short time, with his members rotting and being eaten by worms, and he ended his life in a most wretched manner.

January 01

Circumcision of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Since the Mosaic Law commands that if a woman give birth to a male child, he should be circumcised in the foreskin of his flesh on the eighth day (Lev. 12:2-3), on this, the eighth day from His Nativity, our Saviour

accepted the circumcision commanded by the Law. According to the command of the Angel, He received the Name which is above every name: JESUS, which means "Saviour" (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31 and 2:21).

January 01

Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia

Saint Basil the Great was born about the end of the year 329 in Caesarea of Cappadocia, to a family renowned for their learning and holiness. His parents' names were Basil and Emily. His mother Emily (commemorated July 19) and his grandmother Macrina (Jan. 14) are Saints of the Church, together with all his brothers and sisters: Macrina, his elder sister (July 19), Gregory of Nyssa (Jan. 10), Peter of Sebastia (Jan. 9), and Naucratius. Basil studied in Constantinople under the sophist Libanius, then in Athens, where also he formed a friendship with the young Gregory, a fellow Cappadocian, later called "the Theologian." Through the good influence of his sister Macrina (see July 19), he chose to embrace the ascetical life, abandoning his worldly career. He visited the monks in Egypt, in Palestine, in Syria, and in Mesopotamia, and upon returning to Caesarea, he departed to a hermitage on the Iris River in Pontus, not far from Annesi, where his mother and his sister Macrina were already treading the path of the ascetical life; here he also wrote his ascetical homilies.

About the year 370, when the bishop of his

country reposed, he was elected to succeed to his throne and was entrusted with the Church of Christ, which he tended for eight years, living in voluntary poverty and strict asceticism, having no other care than to defend holy Orthodoxy as a worthy successor of the Apostles. The Emperor Valens, and Modestus, the Eparch of the East, who were of one mind with the Arians, tried with threats of exile and of torments to bend the Saint to their own confession, because he was the bastion of Orthodoxy in all Cappadocia, and preserved it from heresy when Arianism was at its strongest. But he set all their malice at naught, and in his willingness to give himself up to every suffering for the sake of the Faith, showed himself to be a martyr by volition. Modestus, amazed at Basil's fearlessness in his presence, said that no one had ever so spoken to him. "Perhaps," answered the Saint, "you have never met a bishop before." The Emperor Valens himself was almost won over by Basil's dignity and wisdom. When Valens' son fell gravely sick, he asked Saint Basil to pray for him. The Saint promised that his son would be restated if Valens agreed to have him baptized by the Orthodox; Valens agreed, Basil prayed, and the son was restored. But afterwards the Emperor had him baptized by Arians, and the child died soon after. Later, Valens, persuaded by his counsellors, decided to send the Saint into exile because he would not accept the Arians into communion; but his pen broke when he was signing the edict of banishment. He tried a second time and a third, but the same thing happened, so that the Emperor was filled with dread, and tore up the document, and Basil was not banished. The truly great

Basil, spent with extreme ascetical practices and continual labours, at the helm of the church, departed to the Lord on the 1st of January, in 379. at the age of forty-nine.

His writings are replete with wisdom and erudition, and rich are these gifts he set forth the doctrines concerning the mysteries both of the creation (see his Hexaemeron) and of the Holy Trinity (see On the Holy Spirit). Because of the majesty and keenness of his eloquence, he is honoured as "the revealer of heavenly things" and "the Great."

Saint Basil is also celebrated on January 30th with Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom.

Rest from labour.

Hymns of the Day



Tone 2 Troparion (Resurrection)

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal,
You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead.

And when from the depths You raised the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
"O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!"

Tone 4 Troparion (Feast)

Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
were taught by a star to adore You,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Orient from on high.//
O Lord, glory to You!

Tone 2 Troparion (Righteous Ones)

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph,
to David, the ancestor of God;
you have seen a Virgin great with child;
and you gave glory with the shepherds;
you worshipped with the Magi,
and received the news from the Angel.//
Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Tone 3 Kontakion (Righteous Ones)

Today godly David is filled with joy;
Joseph and James offer praise.
The glorious crown of their kinship with Christ
fills them with great joy.
They sing praises to the One ineffably born on earth,//
and they cry out: "O Compassionate One, save those who honor You!"

Tone 3 Kontakion (Feast)

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One,
and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One!
Angels with shepherds glorify Him!
The wise men journey with the star,//
since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child!

Tone 2 Prokeimenon (Resurrection)

The Lord is my strength and my song; / He

has become my salvation. (Ps. 117:14)

V. The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over to death.
(Ps. 117:18)

Tone 4 Prokeimenon (Righteous Ones)

God is wonderful in His saints, / the God of Israel. (Ps. 67:35a)

(Instead of "It is truly meet..." we sing:)

Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts.

I behold a strange, most glorious mystery:
heaven—the cave;
the cherubic throne—the Virgin;
the manger—the place where Christ lay:
the uncontainable God, Whom we magnify in song.

(or, the ninth heirmos of the second canon)

Out of fear, we should choose to love silence,
for that is a safer course;
so difficult it is lovingly to compose intricately woven songs
to you, O Virgin.
But grant us strength, O Mother,
equal to our natural calling.

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him
in the highest! (Ps. 148:1)
Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise
befits the just! (Ps. 32:1)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Psalm 67.35,26.

God is wonderful among his saints.
Verse: Bless God in the congregations.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 1:11-19.

Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Gospel Reading

Sunday after Nativity

The Reading is from Matthew 2:13-23

When the wise men departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more." But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaos reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream

he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Wisdom of the Fathers

Nathanael too enters ... saying, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" ... Nevertheless, He is not ashamed to be named even from thence, signifying that He needs not ought of the things of men; and His disciples also He chooses out of Galilee.

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 9 on Matthew 2, 4th Century

At His birth [He] is laid in a manger, and abides in an inn, and takes a mother of low estate; teaching us to think no such thing a disgrace, and from the first outset trampling under foot the haughtiness of man, and bidding us give ourselves up to virtue only. For why do you pride yourself on your country, when I am commanding thee to be a stranger to the whole world?

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 9 on Matthew 2, 4th Century

The Ancient of Days, who in times past gave Moses the Law on Sinai, appears this day as a babe. As Maker of the Law He fulfills

the Law, and according to the Law He is brought into the temple and given over to the Elder.

Anatolios

Festal Menaion. Great Vespers.

Beyond the Sermon



The Sunday After
Nativity - sermon by Fr
Andrew Gliga

Beloved in the Lord, in our Orthodox faith, we have Saints who have shown forth as examples of how we should live our faith. We have three

of them which we commemorate today, Joseph the betrothed, David the King, and James the brother of the Lord, who was one of Joseph's children from an earlier marriage. Not only do we have Saints who lived forth and showed us righteousness, but we also have examples of the opposite; wicked people that live in sin which we should use as an example of what to refrain from. One of those, presented in the Gospel reading today, is the evil King Herod. Herod himself was a man who desired power and position. He had received his crown from the occupying Romans and was not a true heir of the King David. When Herod saw that a prophecy foretold that a King of Israel would be raised up out of Judea, he feared that

he would lose his position of power and no longer be king. He had sent the three Magi to find where the Christ child was born in order to have him killed. However, as we see, the Magi had realized Herod's wickedness and had gone home another way. In his rage, King Herod ordered the murder of 14,000 children ages two and under in order to preserve his false kingship. Christ and his family had escaped to Egypt and there they found salvation. We see that this story is very similar to that of Moses where the Pharaoh had all the children killed in order to maintain his rule over the Israelites. As we see the Church had always placed importance on human life and the dignity of the human being. The Roman empire had practiced abandoning unwanted children and leaving them to die. When the Church had replaced the pagan religion of the empire, this practice too was also outlawed. Those youngest among us should always be preserved.

All these ancient practices to our modern human society seem extremely barbaric. We in our modern advanced age see all those ancient kings and people as primitive. However, in our modern day and age we are no better than those before us, and even worse than they are! Take for example of what we heard just last week; a famous actress had won an award for some movie she played in. During her acceptance speech, she was thankful for the fact that she was able to choose to abort her child, and that if she hadn't done so, she would not have been able to be a successful actress. What strikes me is how similar this account is to the story of Herod! She chose her career, her comfort, her luxury over

the life of her own child. When she said this, all the people present cheered her on for the decision she exercised. This shows that those today not only have no shame in their sin, but are encouraged by those around them. This epidemic of abortion in our society is really troubling. We have 1,058,000 abortions done each year in our country. What makes it even troubling is that the statistics on abortion show that 97% of all abortions are done purely out of convenience, or not wanting a child. This is such a staggering number. It isn't about victims of rape, which constitute less than 0.5% as we so often hear but rather the statistics show that this modern practice is all about maintaining materialistic pleasures.

Life according to the Orthodox Church begins at conception as we see the Prophet John leaped in the womb of Elizabeth, when he sensed Christ in the womb of Mary. The Christ child was not just a couple of cells, but a living person. We, as Orthodox Christians, have to stand by and protect the innocent, even those the smallest in the womb. We should always keep in mind that our faith should affect every aspect of our lives. If it does not, then we are doing something wrong. We cannot sit idly and watch those around us continue to freely choose death over life; this is not what one who loves their neighbor does. In two weeks on January 25th, we have the annual Walk for Life in San Francisco, where us Orthodox Christians, get together with other people and protest this wicked modern practice. We will have a moleben in which we will pray for all those who have been victims of this modern practice.

We should try our best to show up to this event in order to offer our voice and support to those around us. This is a peaceful gathering of people in order to try to make a difference and change the hearts and minds of people. By attending we lend our voice in order to protect those innocents; by staying home we show our indifference to this. We should always try to live out our faith to the fullest.

https://sainthermanmission.org/news_200114_1

