



## 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.

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Bulletin for Sunday, January 02, 2022

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### 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**

### **Reminder**

Currently all scheduled services, with the exception of Divine Liturgy, are held via streaming only. Please consult the Parish Calendar (on our web site) for access to the Zoom invitation.

### **A Promise**

Throughout the past two years, we have undergone much to be afraid and anxious about: COVID, civil unrest, political dissent, myriad natural disasters - this list goes on even longer when we consider personal situations along with these social tragedies. All of this has represented a challenge to us physically, emotionally and spiritually as well.

While we have introduced health safety protocols to insure the physical wellbeing of parishioners, which also may improve our emotional health at the same time. Yet, given our (my) pre-occupation with current and past events, we (I) have spent little significant time addressing our spiritual needs. It is time for this to change.

Christ exhorts us not to be anxious about tomorrow (Matt 6:34) nor to be afraid in our present circumstances (Matt 8:26). Yet these commandments are predicated on 'seeking the Kingdom' and 'having faith'. So how do we fulfill these commandments? How are we to seek the Kingdom and develop our faith during these trying times?

The Church, in the ineffable mercy of God, provides us with the means to fortify our spiritual necessities by means of the Holy Sacraments and in particular through the reception of Holy Communion.

"Be not afraid" is one commandment that Christ continually admonishes us to follow, even in the face of our own mortality. Why? Because He has promised to be with us, always. His very Presence is offered to us, without commendation, if we have the boldness to accept Him. As I stated in a previous email, practicing one's faith, even during the best of times, involves some risk. Nevertheless, we must also place our faith in God and His loving mercy. The sacrament of Holy Communion is the most tangible means through which this is accomplished.

Throughout this time of COVID, there have been many discussions, both "officially" and extemporaneous, about Communion and how it should "best" be partaken by the

clergy and distributed to the faithful. For the most part, these conversations have focused on how Communion ought to be distributed, rather than what it is — truly the Body and Blood of Christ.

I am beginning to believe that this focus has been a mistake: that implementing health safety protocols around the distribution of Holy Communion has, on the whole, actually furthered weakened the faith of some of us who already did not have a strong belief and understanding about the Real Presence of the Body and Blood, to the point where we have now become afraid of receiving Holy Communion.

For those who trust in the Real Presence, no change in the traditional manner of distributing Holy Communion is necessary, even while maintaining other strict health safety protocols. They understand and believe that the benefits of receiving Holy Communion far outweigh the risks presented by COVID. For those who do not have this trust, I have found that no amount of precautions are enough to allay their fears, and that whatever precautions are taken only serves to remind them to be afraid.

Of course, we will continue to take all health safety precautions that have been previously put into place. Holy Communion will continue to be offered as a basic necessity for the health and wellbeing of all who wish to partake. It is my hope that we may return to the traditional way of distributing Communion in the near future, but as we have already begun using multiple spoons, we will continue to do so for the time being.

Finally, while there are those of you who do not agree with what I have written above, I simply reply, “What price your faith?” We continue to persevere through this health crisis, and through the Grace of God, may we be strengthened by our faith, in Jesus’ Name we pray.

## 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 institutionalized, 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.

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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

January 2 to January 10, 2022

#### Sunday, January 2

Sunday before Epiphany  
 9:30AM Divine Liturgy

#### Monday, January 3

Forefeast of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

#### Tuesday, January 4

Forefeast of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ  
 8:30AM Daily Matins

#### Wednesday, January 5

Eve of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ  
 8:00AM Royal Hours of Theophany  
 6:00PM Great Vespers with Litya

#### Thursday, January 6

Theophany  
 8:30AM Divine Liturgy with Great Blessing of Water

#### Friday, January 7

Synaxis of John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner  
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#### Saturday, January 8

George of Hozeva  
 5:30PM Great Vespers

#### Sunday, January 9

Sunday after Epiphany  
 9:30AM Divine Liturgy with Blessing of LIS

#### Monday, January 10

Afterfeast of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

## Saints and Feasts

## **January 02**

### **Sylvester, Pope of Rome**

Saint Sylvester was a native of Rome. Because of his exceeding virtue, he succeeded Saint Miltiades as Pope in 314. Since he himself was unable to be present at the First Ecumenical Council in 325, he sent delegates of his own Roman clergy to represent him in Nicaea. He reposed in the year 325.

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## **January 02**

### **Seraphim the Wonderworker of Sarov**

Saint Seraphim was born in the town of Kursk in 1759. From tender childhood he was under the protection of the most holy Mother of God, who, when he was nine years old, appeared to him in a vision, and through her icon of Kursk, healed him from a grave sickness from which he had not been expected to recover. At the age of nineteen he entered the monastery of Sarov, where he amazed all with his obedience, his lofty asceticism, and his great humility. In 1780 the Saint was stricken with a sickness which he manfully endured for three years, until our Lady the Theotokos healed him, appearing to him with the Apostles Peter and John. He was tonsured a monk in 1786, being named for the holy Hieromartyr Seraphim, Bishop of Phanarion (Dec. 4), and was ordained deacon a year later. In his unquenchable love for God, he continually added labours to labours, increasing in virtue and prayer with titan strides. Once,

during the Divine Liturgy of Holy and Great Thursday, he was counted worthy of a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who appeared encompassed by the heavenly hosts. After this dread vision, he gave himself over to greater labours.

In 1794, Saint Seraphim took up the solitary life in a cell in the forest. This period of extreme asceticism lasted some fifteen years, until 1810. It was at this time that he took upon himself one of the greatest feats of his life. Assailed with despondency and a storm of contrary thoughts raised by the enemy of our salvation, the Saint passed a thousand nights on a rock, continuing in prayer until God gave him complete victory over the enemy. On another occasion, he was assaulted by robbers, who broke his chest and his head with their blows, leaving him almost dead. Here again, he began to recover after an appearance of the most holy Theotokos, who came to him with the Apostles Peter and John, and pointing to Saint Seraphim, uttered those awesome words, "This is one of my kind."

In 1810, at the age of fifty; weakened with his more than human struggles, Saint Seraphim returned to the monastery for the third part of his ascetical labours, in which he lived as a recluse until 1825. For the first five years of his reclusion, he spoke to no one at all, and little is known of this period. After five years, he began receiving visitors little by little, giving counsel and consolation to ailing souls. In 1825,

the most holy Theotokos appeared to the Saint and revealed to him that it was pleasing to God that he fully end his seclusion; from this time the number of people who came to see him grew daily. It was also at the command of the holy Virgin that he undertook the spiritual direction of the Diveyevo Convent. He healed bodily ailments, foretold things to come, brought hardened sinners to repentance, and saw clearly the secrets of the heart of those who came to him. Through his utter humility and childlike simplicity, his unrivalled ascetical travails, and his angel-like love for God, he ascended to the holiness and greatness of the ancient God-bearing Fathers and became like Anthony for Egypt, the physician for the whole Russian land. In all, the most holy Theotokos appeared to him twelve times in his life. The last was on Annunciation, 1831, to announce to him that he would soon, enter into his rest. She appeared to him accompanied by twelve virgins-martyrs and monastic saints-with Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Theologian. With a body ailing and broken from innumerable hardships, and an unspotted soul shining with the light of Heaven, the Saint lived less than two years after this, falling asleep in peace on January 2, 1833, chanting Paschal hymns. On the night of his repose, the righteous Philaret of the Glinsk Hermitage beheld his soul ascending to Heaven in light. Because of the universal testimony to the singular holiness of his life, and the seas of miracles that he performed both in life and after death,

his veneration quickly spread beyond the boundaries of the Russian Empire to every corner of the earth. See also July 19.

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### **January 03**

#### **Malachi the Prophet**

The Prophet Malachi ("messenger of God") is the last of the twelve minor Prophets, and also of all the Prophets of the Old Testament. He prophesied in the days of Nehemias, a wise man among the Jews, who also held a high and powerful position in the court of Artaxerxes the Long-armed, King of the Persians, who reigned from 465 to 424 B.C. Malachis' book of prophecy is divided into four chapters; he foretold the coming of Christ as the Sun of Righteousness (4:2)

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### **January 06**

#### **The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**

About the beginning of our Lord's thirtieth year, John the Forerunner, who was some six months older than Our Saviour according to the flesh, and had lived in the wilderness since his childhood, received a command from God and came into the parts of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Then our Saviour also came from Galilee to the Jordan, and sought and received baptism though He was the Master and John was but a servant. Whereupon, there came to pass those marvellous deeds, great and beyond nature: the Heavens were opened, the Spirit

descended in the form of a dove upon Him that was being baptized and the voice was heard from the Heavens hearing witness that this was the beloved Son of God, now baptized as a man (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22). From these events the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the Trinity were demonstrated. It is also from this that the present feast is called "Theophany," that is, the divine manifestation, God's appearance among men. On this venerable day the sacred mystery of Christian baptism was inaugurated; henceforth also began the saving preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

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## January 07

### **Synaxis of John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner**

Today we celebrate the Synaxis in honour of the most sacred Forerunner, since he ministered at the Mystery of the Divine Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rest from labour. Fish allowed.

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## January 08

### **Domnica the Righteous of Constantinople**

Saint Domnica was from Carthage. During the reign of the Emperor Theodosius the Great, she came with four other virgins to Constantinople, where she was baptized by Nectarius, the Patriarch of Constantinople.

She remained in Constantinople and became known for her extreme asceticism, the miracles that she worked, and the grace of prophecy that adorned her. She lived until the days of the Emperors Leo and Zeno, reposing in peace about the year 474.

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## Hymns of the Day



### **Tone 3 Troparion (Resurrection)**

Let the heavens rejoice!  
Let the earth be glad!  
For the Lord has shown  
strength with His arm.  
He has trampled down  
death by death.

He has become the first born of the dead.  
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,  
and has granted to the world//  
great mercy.

### **Tone 4 Troparion (Forefeast)**

Prepare, O Zebulon,  
and adorn yourself, O Naphtali!  
River Jordan, cease flowing,  
and receive with joy the Master coming to be  
baptized!  
Adam, rejoice with our first Mother,  
and do not hide yourselves as you did of old in  
Paradise;  
for having seen you naked,  
He has appeared to clothe you with the first  
garment.//  
Christ has appeared to renew all creation.

### **Tone 4 Troparion (St. Seraphim)**

You loved Christ from your youth, O blessed one,  
and, longing to work for Him alone, you  
struggled in the wilderness in constant prayer  
and labor.

With penitent heart and great love for Christ  
you were favored by the Mother of God.

Therefore we cry to you://  
“Save us by your prayers, venerable Seraphim,  
our father!”

### **Tone 3 Kontakion (Resurrection)**

On this day You rose from the tomb, O  
Merciful One,  
leading us from the gates of death.

On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;  
with the Prophets and Patriarchs//  
they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of  
Your power.

### **Tone 2 Kontakion (St. Seraphim)**

Forsaking the beauty as well as the corruption  
of this world,  
you settled in the monastery of Sarón, O Saint.  
There you lived an angelic life,  
becoming for many the way to salvation.  
Therefore, Christ has glorified you, O Father  
Seraphim,  
enriching you with abundant healing and  
miracles.//  
So we cry to thee: Save us by your prayers,  
venerable Seraphim, our father!

### **Tone 4 Kontakion (Forefeast)**

Today the Lord enters the Jordan and cries  
out to John:  
“Do not be afraid to baptize Me.//

For I have come to save Adam, the first-  
formed man.”

### **Tone 6 Prokeimenon (Sunday Before)**

O Lord, save Your people, / and bless Your  
inheritance! (Ps. 27:9a)

V. To You, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not  
silent to me! (Ps. 27:1a)

### **Tone 7 Prokeimenon (St. Seraphim)**

Precious in the sight of the Lord / is the death  
of His saints. (Ps. 115:6)

### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him  
in the highest! (Ps. 148:1)  
The righteous shall be in everlasting  
remembrance. He shall not fear evil  
tidings. (Ps. 111:6)  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## **Gospel and Epistle Readings**

### **Epistle Reading**

#### **Prokeimenon. 6th Tone. Psalm 27.9,1.**

O Lord, save your people and bless your  
inheritance.

Verse: To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.

#### **The reading is from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8.**

TIMOTHY, my son, always be steady, endure  
suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil  
your ministry.

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For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

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## Gospel Reading

### Sunday before Epiphany

#### The Reading is from Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' John was baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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## Wisdom of the Fathers

But this exists in Christ, not as a thing received, nor by communication from another, but as His own, and as belonging to His substance, for He baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

### St. Cyril of Alexandria

*Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 10., 4th Century*

## Beyond the Sermon



### Sunday before Theophany - Orthodox Homily on the New Year

Today is both a day of preparation as it is a day of decision. In earthly terms, a new year has been born and we've entered into a new time, filled with new decisions, new joys, new trials, and new opportunities. We're also at the door of Theophany, which itself, in heavenly terms, represents to us a new beginning of the most tremendous spiritual magnitude for us. As Christ is baptized into the waters of the Jordan, all is made new, the waters are sanctified just as those who follow Christ into baptism, 'put Him on' (in the language of St. Paul and the Church) and are

themselves made anew, as Christ proclaims to us in truth.

And because this is the New Year, many people make New Year resolutions: I'll go on a diet, get more exercise, quit smoking, etc.—all good things, but what about our spiritual resolutions? Where do we want God to take us this year spiritually? What goals have we set for ourselves, our family, our church?

It can be tempting to buy into the thinking that this year will be the same as all other years; that since many of my past resolutions have failed, why try a new one? "I'm this way or that way, I have these passions, I'll never change." All such thinking is pride; it denies the reality of the witness of changed lives we see in the lives of countless sinners turned Saints before us. To deny the possibility of growth and healing from passions and sin-sickness, is to deny the reality of Christ God Himself—the reality we proclaim in the Incarnation and at the Theophany.

Brothers and sisters, time never stands still: this year will bring much change with it—changes in my life, changes in your life. I know in my own life, my family's life, we will have a new baby boy soon. What joy! New life will be with us and with it another brother baptized into Christ.

But also, my Mother is dying. And so, as I gain a life, I'm losing her with whom I was so close all my life. She is going on, we pray, to a new life with Christ in His Kingdom. My Uncle, just two weeks ago, woke my aunt up to tell her he was having a stroke. Minutes later, his body lay in a hospital bed, paralyzed, and a few hours later, he had reposed. Life is precious. Life on this earth is uncertain. Life with Christ is as certain

as it is eternal.

How are we preparing ourselves in Christ to make the most of this season that God's granted us to live? What are you asking God for that you need to more effectively live out your baptism?

St. Paul's words to us today are very sobering, "But you, be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of the evangelist, fulfill your ministry." Folks, it's time that you see yourself as a missionary, as one who is truly "born anew." How many times do we give ourselves excuses for why we aren't living a life reflective of the Kingdom of God, of one who's walking this life with Christ while we still draw breath?

Let's stop giving ourselves excuses and remember what it is we're fighting for: our participation in the Kingdom, life with Christ, who is the only Life there is.

For this reason, St. Paul says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." In fact, twice today in two different readings, St. Paul admonishes us with analogies to running a race. In our Epistle for this Sunday he reminds us again of this 'race of faith,' saying, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." (I Cor. 9:24).

Do we see the Kingdom of God and the possibility of growth in life with Him, of deification, as a prize we're willing to put all our efforts into attaining, or do we simply take it for granted?

In today's Gospel, we're reminded of those in St. John the Baptist's day who trusted in their status as sons of Abraham. "Every tree," he says, "which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So the people asked him, saying, 'What

shall we do then?" The answer comes from him as it does from St. Paul: "Be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." We have all been given by virtue of our baptism into Christ a holy calling, a ministry: Christ calls us "the light of the world," the "salt of the earth." St. Paul likens us to Christ's "ambassadors." The word is clear: if we are in Christ, we are to live as those in Christ and impact the world around us with His truth.

Resolve that this year be different, better than all the rest. Resolve this year, that you will run the race of faith to win the imperishable crown, that you will take several steps forward in faith, leaving behind the things that trip you up, practices and the 'same 'ol' tired arguments, excuses, habits, whatever, that hold you back from pressing forward in your growth in Christ in His Kingdom. Avail yourself more fully of the Church and its resources (services, the Holy Scriptures, the Lives of the Saints, the books of the Church), commit yourself to growth, give of yourself as a witness of the truth of Christ in an age and a culture of disbelief and you will truly be that evangelist which you and I are called to be because through your humble, honest struggle and discipline, Christ will shine His light, love, and truth through you.

Know this: That those who don't believe, will see the difference in you and me. Those who see our witness, may grow in being more receptive, or, they may react more vehemently, because by your witness, you are—either way—challenging their status quo and that's uncomfortable. Take heart, as Christ says, "these things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace;

in the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

It is not yet too late for any of us. We have the opportunity to prayerfully commit each day, each moment to Christ—and that is a victory, that is evidence of Christ and His Kingdom at work in me and you—every time we repent, every time we pray, every time we witness to His truth.

I pray for you a most blessed new year, filled with Christ God's grace, light, and life, that you may bear the fruit of the Kingdom in your life and, that through your life, others too may come to be born anew of water and the spirit.

Fr. Robert Miclean  
Holy Archangels Orthodox Church  
Sunday, 5 January 2014  
Sunday before Theophany

Epistle: I Cor. 9:19-27; II Timothy 4:5-8,  
Gospel: Luke 3:1-18; Mark 1:1-8

# The Bible and the Liturgy (Part I)



This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



**A passage from Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians offers us a chance to see how closely the prayers of the Divine Liturgy are based on the words of Scripture.**

The passage is Ephesians 3: 8-21. Like the rest of the letter to the Ephesians, these verses emphasize God's eternal plan to offer salvation and eternal life to every person. The Lord wants not only His chosen people, Israel, to find their way to the Kingdom, but the Gentiles as well. In fact, Paul begins the third chapter of the letter by referring to himself as "Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles."

In 3:8 Paul describes himself as "the very least of all the saints." The same recognition of personal unworthiness is reflected in the words of the Divine Liturgy. As the priest partakes of the bread and then the cup of Holy Communion, he says that the Most Holy Body and the Most Holy Blood of Jesus Christ are "given to me, the unworthy priest ....." and then inserts his own name.

The Communion Prayer said by the congregation expresses a similar idea. Each person who is to receive the Eucharist confesses belief in Christ as the Son of the living God, who came into the world to save sinners, "of whom I am first" or "of whom I am chief."

Some people wonder a little about these words. Do we really have to say that we are worse than everybody else? Surely there are people who have sinned more seriously than we have.

But Paul's next words show us the true significance of these self-accusations. He writes that though he is the least of all the saints, "to me this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things." In other words, not only does God have a wonderful plan for us, but Paul has been given the grace to know the plan and to reveal it to others. The privilege of being given this grace is so overwhelming that Paul can only feel awe at its immensity and his unworthiness.

In the prayers of the priest and the congregation receiving the Eucharist, the sense of privilege is the same. The priest and people are about to enter into the Mysteries of God Himself. They are about to be given the precious Body and precious Blood that are foretastes of life everlasting, of heaven itself. For them, as for Saint Paul, the only possible response is awe at the immensity of such a gift. That is why each person saying the Communion Prayer asks God to "make me worthy" to receive such a gift. No human being is capable of earning it.

Each one of us is the first among sinners, but God offers Himself to us anyway. Saint Paul shares our wonder at such generosity and grace.