

Magnificat

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2012

He is Born!

The Byzantine liturgical observance of Christmas – or, more properly, the **Feast of the Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ** – is filled with exuberant joy. It celebrates the seminal event of our salvation, the manifestation of God's incomprehensibly great love for His fallen creation, the birth of Him whose life and teaching, death and resurrection, bring Life and Light to the whole world.

This Child is like no other. In Him, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Son of Mary, we have found our Savior and Messiah. Son of God, and God the Son, Jesus is our Immanuel, our God-with-us. In Him alone, in this One we now contemplate as a helpless infant lying in a lowly manger, rests all our hope for peace.

Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem!
Today He who knows no beginning begins to be!

Today the word is made flesh!

All the powers of heaven rejoice,
the earth and all mankind exult in good cheer;
the Magi offer gifts to the Master,

the shepherds marvel at the One who has been born,
and we, we incessantly cry aloud:

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will among men.

From Matins of Christmas

With the birth of Christ Jesus, God enters and becomes part of His creation. He whom no man can see and live comes to be seen in the person of a new born child. He who can do all things accepts the limitations of our human condition. He who framed the heavens is born in a cave,

bound in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. He who sustains and provides food for all living things is held in His mother's arms and nourished with her milk.

In His coming amongst us, God shows forth the humility of His love. The wondrous beauty of it

all causes the angels in heaven to sing so as to be heard on earth. In our celebration of the Feast we seek to join our feeble voices with theirs and express, in so far as is possible with human words, our own wonder and exultation at the event.

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Chicago, and belonging to the Ukrainian Metropolis in the United States of America, which is in union with the Pope of Rome, supreme pastor of the universal Church. We embrace Evangelical poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability of life, according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and the traditions of the Christian East. In our skete at Jacob's Falls, on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, we devote ourselves to a common life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.

For all their great length and the grandiloquence of their discursive language, however, the Services, themselves, are remarkably sober. Exhaustive readings from the Old Testament provide background and context, and selections from the Letters to the Hebrews and the Galatians offer theological reflection; but it is the simple narrative drawn from the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel and from the second chapter of St. Luke's that shapes and propels the observance. The exquisite poetry enshrining these passages of Scripture is thoroughly theological – and decidedly unsentimental. The same may be said concerning the visual imagery that accompanies and manifests the Feast.

The familiar Christmas Crèche of the Western Church presents an image of what St. Luke (2:16) reports the shepherds saw at Bethlehem on the night of Christ's birth. The near-naked Infant lies at center in a cradle, with Mary and Joseph – and perhaps an ox and an ass – devoutly looking on. The shepherds, accompanied by their sheep, contemplate the Holy Family from outside the rustic stable. The Magi of St. Matthew's account (Mt. 2:11) are usually there, as well. The tableau is simple, heart warming, and consonant with the Scriptural narrative. Dear friends gave us such a crèche many years ago, and we display it in the narthex of our church during the Christmas season.

The icon enshrined on the tetrapod within the church relies on the same Scriptures – with an addition or two from ancient Eastern tradition – and essentially relates the same story, but it leaves us with a radically different impression. The scene is set, not in a bucolic countryside, nor against a backdrop of evergreens, but amid a tumble of jagged rocks. The ox and the ass are there (they too, along with all of creation, are renewed by God's entry into the world), but their shelter is the inky blackness of a yawning cave, the darkness of the fallen world, into which Christ comes to be its Light; and they look down, not at an open-armed and cuddly baby, but at an Infant tightly bound in swaddling clothes and

lying mummy-like in their stone manger, which looks very much like a sarcophagus.

Scripture, of course, makes no specific mention of ox, ass, stable, or cave. But the presence of a manger, a feed trough, indicates the sheltering of domestic animals, which even today often occurs in natural caves throughout the Middle East. Moreover, at least since the early fourth century, tradition has identified the site of Christ's birth with a cave that may still be seen beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Thus, in both hymnography and iconography, the Eastern Church remembers our Lord's first shelter as a cave and offers it as sort of an earthly counterpart to the star, which shines its rays upon the Child and guides the Magi, who bring him gifts from the left of the icon. On the right a shepherd pipes a tune to his sheep, while above, angels offer hymns of praise to God on high, even as one leans down to offer a blanket to the Newborn King.

Mary, as befits her dignity as Mother of God, rests near the Child on a sumptuous bed. Her gaze is turned away from Christ because she knows the prophecies (cf. Is. 53) concerning his future sufferings and greatness. Keeping all these things in her heart (Lk. 2:19), she looks towards Joseph, who, peripheral to the event, since he is not His Father, sits dejectedly in the lower left corner, assailed by the Tempter, in the guise of an old shepherd, with doubts about the miracle that has occurred. At lower right, two women prepare a bath for the Infant, indicating that His birth was truly natural, and foreshadowing His baptism and the baptism of all who come to believe in Him. The tree in the foreground reminds us that Christ is the branch from the root of Jesse (cf. Is. 11:1), the scion of the House David, who redeems us by the Tree of the Cross.

Like the Feast it illuminates, the icon of the Nativity is holistic, depicting for us not only the bare events, but also their theological and spiritual significance. God grant that, in our observance of Christmas, we recognize and draw closer to Him who is the Light and Salvation of the world.



Services, Christmas 2012

Sunday, 23 December 2012 -- Sunday Before Christmas

5:30 pm (Saturday)	Great Vespers	1) Genesis 14:14-20; 2) Deuteronomy 1:8-11.15-17; 3) Deuteronomy 10:14-21
10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Hebrews 11:9-10.17-23.32-40; 2) Mt. 1:1-25

Monday, 24 December 2012 -- Vigil of Christmas

5:00 am	Matins and First Hour Pss: 5, 44(45), 45(46)	1) Micah 5:2-4; 2) Hebrews 1:1-12; 3) Matthew 1:18-25
9:00 am	Third Hour Pss: 66(67), 86(87), 50(51)	1) Baruch 3:36-4:4; 2) Galatians 3:23-4:5; 3) Luke 2:1-20
11:00 am	Sixth Hour Pss: 71(72), 131(132), 90(91)	1) Isaiah 7:10-16;8:1-4,8-10; 2) Hebrews 1:10-2:3; 3) Matthew 2:1-12
1:30 pm	Ninth Hour Pss: 109(110), 110(111), 85(86)	1) Isaiah 9:6-7; 2) Hebrews 2:11-18; 3) Matthew 2:13-23
4:30 pm	Solemn Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great	1) Genesis 1:1-13; 2) Numbers 24:2-3,5-9,17-18; 3) Micah 4:6-7,5:2-4; 4) Isaiah 11:1-10; 5) Baruch 3:35-4:4; 6) Daniel 2:31-36,44-45; 7) Isaiah 9:6-7; 8) Isaiah 7:10-16;8:1-4,9-10; 9) Hebrews 1:1-12; 10) Luke 2:1-20
9:00 pm	Great Compline and Solemn Matins Pss: 134(135), 109(110), 110(111)	1) Matthew 1:18-25

Tuesday, 25 December 2012 -- Christmas Day

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Galatians 4:4-7; 2) Matthew 2:1-12
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Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

A Light in Gathering Darkness ⁵

On the seventh day of December, midway through our fast in preparation of celebrating the Nativity of the Lord, the Churches of both East and West keep the memory of our father among the saints Ambrose, bishop of Milan.

St. Ambrose was born the youngest of three children, about 340 AD, most likely at Trier on the Mosel River in what is now Germany near its border with Luxemburg, where his father, also named Ambrose, was serving as Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, chief civil administrator in the western quarter of the Roman Empire. The elder Ambrose died before the Saint's adolescence, and his widow returned with her children to Rome. Marcellina, who was about ten years older than Ambrose, had received the veil of consecrated virginity at the hands of Pope Liberius and continued to live, along with another consecrated virgin, in the family home; her presence and witness contributed greatly to her brother's religious formation, endowing him with an admiration for virginity that inspired his promotion of that holy state throughout his life. As befitted the son of one who had attained to the highest position possible for a subject of the Roman Empire, Ambrose also received the best liberal education of his day, acquiring a thorough mastery of Greek and considerable ability as a poet, as well as the great talent for rhetoric that would propel him into a legal career.

He began public life as an advocate in the court of the Praetorian Prefect of Italy at Sirmium, in what is now Serbia. His eloquence and quick grasp of the issues at hand, as well as his evident virtue, soon caught the attention of the Prefect, Anicius Probus, who brought the young man into his council of advisors and groomed him for promotion. Toward 370, the Emperor Valentinian I advanced him to consular rank and named him governor of Aemilia and Liguria. Sending him

off to Milan to assume his new post, the Prefect, with unwitting prophecy, charged Ambrose: *Go, and govern not as a judge, but as a bishop.*

Ambrose heeded the advice naturally and well. The province and, particularly, the city were in constant danger of being torn apart by religious strife, as Arianism, some fifty years after the Council of Nicaea, had not yet been laid to rest. But both the Catholic and Arian factions trusted Ambrose, who proved a capable and just administrator; although of Catholic persuasion, he was able to keep himself above the fray and preserve the peace. This general trust and affection would soon bring his government service to an end.

Adorning the governor's office
with your virtues,
by divine inspiration
you also received the Bishop's throne.
In both a faithful steward
of divine grace, O holy Ambrose,
you thus attained a double crown.

From Vespers for St. Ambrose

In 374, Auxentius, an Arian, who had been Bishop of Milan for nearly twenty years, died. The bishops of the Province, hoping to avoid violence, appealed to the Emperor to appoint a new bishop by edict; Valentinian, however, decided that the election should proceed according to custom. When the discord of the deeply divided throng of clergy and people gathered for the election threatened to turn to riot, Ambrose spoke to the assembly in the hope of restoring order. In the course of his soothing and peaceful exhortation, a voice cried out, *Ambrose for Bishop!* The whole crowd quickly took up the cry, and Ambrose, much to his dismay, found himself, by decisive acclamation, elected Bishop of Milan.

He was just thirty-four years old, and by training a lawyer; only recently had he taken any role in government or public administration. Moreover, according to the custom of the age, though a believing and committed Christian from childhood and virtuous in every aspect of his life, he was not yet baptized. When he protested as much to the assembly, they replied that the lack

could be quickly remedied. Ambrose fled to his palace and wrote to the Emperor begging to be released from this responsibility for which he was in no way prepared. Meanwhile, the bishops of the Province acceded to popular demand and ratified the election. Valentinian, too, who normally took little interest in ecclesiastical affairs, gave his confirmation, commenting that he was greatly pleased that one whom he had chosen as governor was deemed worthy to be bishop. At last, with all honorable escape denied him, the Saint acquiesced to the will of God, accepted Baptism, and a week later, on December 7, after the necessary preliminary ordinations, was consecrated Bishop to the satisfaction of Arian and Catholic alike.

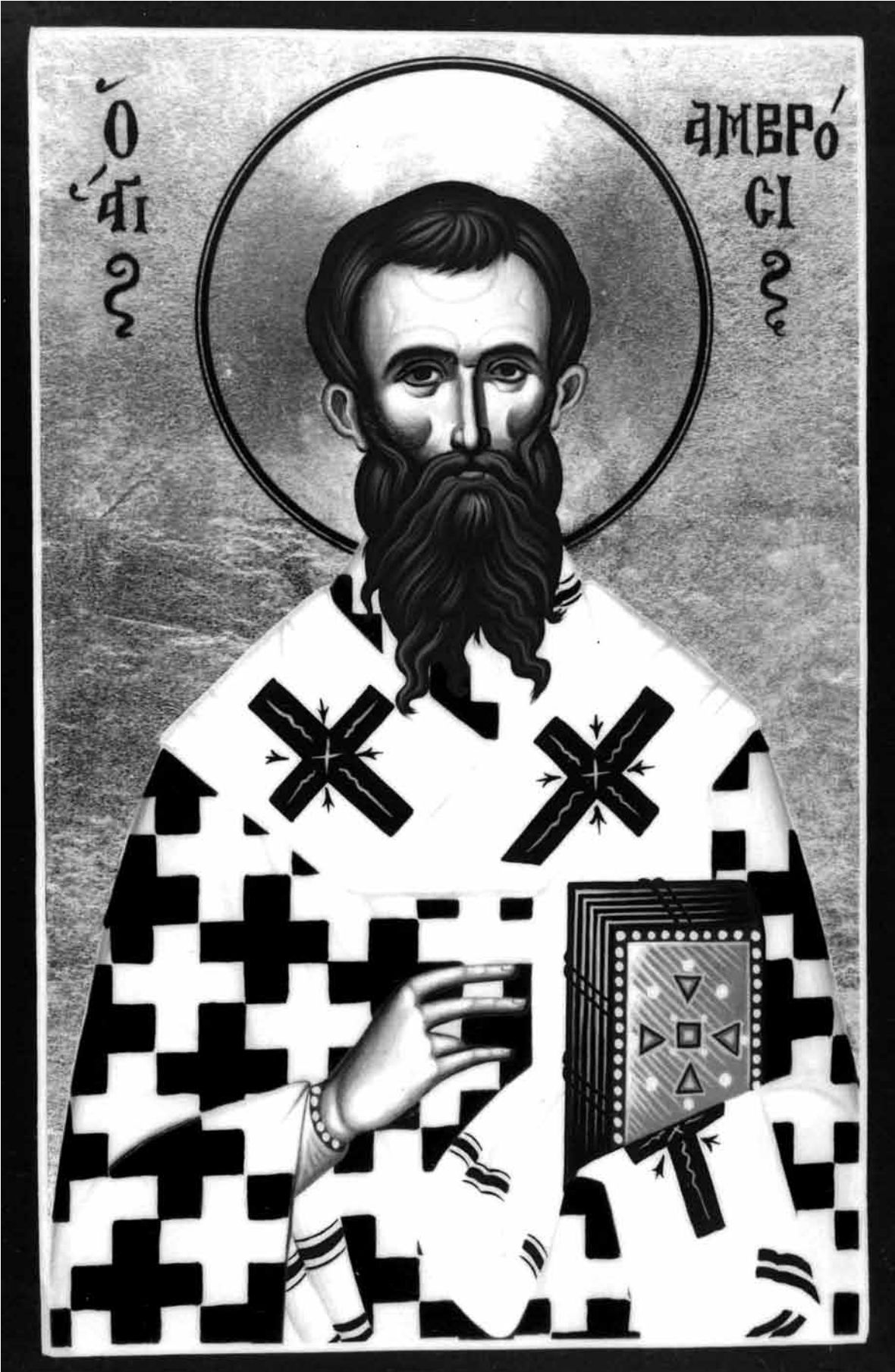
Immediately upon assuming office, the new Bishop sought to distance himself from worldly cares so that he might concentrate the more on his ministry. He distributed his disposable wealth to the poor and made his lands and estates over to the Church, taking care that his sister, Marcellina, be provided for in her life as a consecrated virgin. He entrusted his temporal administrative responsibilities to his brother, Satyrus, and devoted himself to personal and liturgical prayer, to preaching, and to study. Acutely conscious of his own lack of formal theological training, he petitioned the assistance of Pope Damasus, who sent him Simplicianus, a learned Roman priest, under whose guidance the Saint strenuously pursued the study of Scripture and the Fathers. He ruefully observed that he was now obliged to learn and teach at the same time.

His knowledge of Greek allowed him to study the works of Origen, and also those of his own contemporaries, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Basil the Great. Although he preached and wrote in Latin, the common language of the region, and is considered one of the four great Doctors of the Western Church, his thought and teaching remain very much compatible with ancient Eastern tradition, and he is justly revered as a saint of the undivided Church. Had succeeding generations of western bishops and theologians

been able to correspond with their eastern counterparts as he had with St. Basil, the sad divisions of the future might have been avoided.

His personal life was in every way exemplary. He celebrated the Sacred Mysteries every day for the people and preached in the Cathedral on Sundays. Among the vast crowds that would come to hear the simple eloquence of his discourse was the as yet unconverted Augustine, who comments in his *Confessions* that, while he had come only to hear the beauty of their presentation, the Saint's words, themselves, soon penetrated to his heart and set him on the path of conversion. Ambrose lived as an ascetic, eating sparingly and dining only on Saturday and Sunday and some major feast days. To avoid secular entanglements, he made it his custom never to broker a marriage, never to advise someone to join the military, and never to recommend anyone for public office. He remained available throughout the day to all, high or low, who wished to speak with him; he spent long hours at night praying, studying, fleshing out thoughts that had occurred to him during the day, and keeping up with his voluminous correspondence. During his twenty-three years as head of the Church at Milan, he exemplified for all ages since the perfect model of a Christian bishop. There is more than an element of truth in the hyperbolic assertion attributed by St. Theodoret of Cyr (d. ca. 466) to the chastened Emperor Theodosius I: *I know no bishop worthy of the name, except Ambrose.*

Milan was at that time the administrative center of the Roman Empire of the West and the usual residence of the Imperial Court. The times were unsettled, as the western portion of the Empire lurched toward its ultimate collapse; there were barbarian invasions to contend with, civil wars with usurpers, and palace intrigues. It was inevitable that Ambrose, who was in many ways the greatest man of his time and place, should, however unwillingly, be drawn into affairs of state. His major concern, however, was the strengthening of the Church and the purity of its faith, and, here, he and the Empire often crossed paths.



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Valentinian I was an orthodox Catholic, but he had largely remained aloof from religious matters; often as not, perhaps in an attempt to appear impartial, he favored the Arians or the pagans in their disputes with the Catholics. St. Ambrose had followed a similar course during his brief years of civil administration and was, therefore, acceptable to the Arian faction at the time of his election. With his accession to the episcopacy and his ensuing scriptural and theological study, however, he became a staunch proponent of Catholic orthodoxy and used every means at his disposal, including his Imperial connections, to promote and strengthen the true faith.

In 375, the year after Ambrose's election, Valentinian I died of a stroke while on campaign along the Danube. He was fifty-four years old and left behind him two sons, Gratian, who at sixteen had already reigned as co-Emperor with his father for eight years, and his four year old half-

brother, Valentinian II, whom Gratian quickly nominated co-Emperor to ensure peace and, if need be, a peaceful succession. Gratian intended to take an army to the East in order to aid his uncle, the Emperor Valens, who was facing an uprising of Gothic tribesmen. He was fearful, however, of falling into Arianism, which Valens ardently promoted, and begged Ambrose for protective religious instruction. Ambrose responded by writing for him in 377 a short treatise in two books, *On the Faith*, to which he added three additional books two years later.

Valens was defeated and killed by the Goths in 378. Gratian attributed the defeat to his uncle's promotion of Arianism and sought to protect the

Empire from further trials on its account. He nominated Theodosius I, a seasoned military commander some thirteen years his senior and an ardently orthodox Catholic, as Emperor in the East; and he worked to expunge the heresy from the West, convoking a Council at Sirmium that same year, which forbade it by law. In 381 Theodosius summoned the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople, which reiterated and amplified the teachings of the First Council – convoked at Nicaea, in what is now Turkey, by the Emperor Constantine the Great a half century earlier – and condemned Arianism in all its forms. On the advice of Ambrose, Gratian in

Taking your place among the God-Bearing Fathers,

O Venerable Father Ambrose,
you preached the only-begotten Son,

one Person in two natures,
made flesh for us of the Virgin,
and sharing with the Father

His nature and eternity.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
you put down the impious teachings of Arius.

Pray to Christ to grant His Church
peace and harmony and great mercy.

From Vespers for St. Ambrose

the same year also called a synod, which met at Aquileia in Northern Italy; its decrees marked the official end of Arianism in the Western Church.

But these legislative efforts would have proved ineffective were not the heresy already nearing its demise. To-

ward this end, Ambrose labored incessantly, intervening whenever and wherever possible to secure the election of orthodox bishops. By letter he encouraged, exhorted, and corrected his fellow bishops; his treatises and expositions of Scripture, which were mostly reworked sermons, spread his spiritual and moral convictions abroad among the literate; and the sweetness and power of his preaching engaged the common faithful. But he spoke most directly to their hearts through his music.

Arius had spread his heresy through song, reducing his abstruse theological propositions to pithy sayings and setting them to popular tunes, which could be sung at work, as a pastime, or for

entertainment. To counter the snare, Ambrose introduced hymnody, which had already made its appearance in the East, into the liturgy of Milan and the West. He wrote numerous hymns of orthodox theological content, set them to simple, but beautiful, melodies, and taught the people to sing them antiphonally – the congregation forming two choirs and singing the verses in alternation. This proved so effective in drawing the people to orthodoxy that the Arians claimed that Ambrose would cast a magic spell over the congregation with his music. Though the work of many years, the Saint's biographers of the following generations illustrate this success through one dramatic incident.

Ten years after Ambrose' election as Bishop of Milan there was scarcely an Arian to be found among its citizens – except in the Imperial Court. The Empress Justina, mother of Valentinian II, was an Arian and kept about herself a coterie of her fellow heretics; she had maintained, however, a low profile during the reigns of her husband and of her stepson, Gratian. In 383, the twenty-four year old Emperor Gratian was murdered by one of his officers in a coup that swept the usurper, Maximus, to power throughout the Praetorian Prefecture of Gaul. Ambrose, sent on embassy by Justina acting in the name of her minor son, convinced Maximus to confine himself to Britain, Gaul, and Spain; Theodosius, in the East, acquiesced to the arrangement; and Valentinian II, a boy of some twelve years, retained sovereignty in Italy, Illyricum (central Europe to the Danube), and North Africa. Justina was now effectively mistress of a quarter of the Empire, and she began to press her advantage.

You were a lyre, O venerable Father Ambrose,
 sounding the saving melodies of the true faith;
 a melodious harp of the Holy Spirit,
 a sounding trumpet of the Church
 played by the breath of God,
 you captivated the souls of believers
 and poured out upon them
 as from a pure spring
 the purifying waters of divine grace.
 Pray to Christ to grant His Church
 peace and harmony and great mercy.

From Vespers for St. Ambrose

Frustrated by Ambrose in previous attempts to secure a prominent place of worship for her Arian supporters, in January of 386 Justina had her son issue a decree explicitly permitting Arian worship and providing that, under pain of death, no one was to prevent in any place an Arian assembly. She demanded the cathedral for Holy Week services, and, Ambrose having refused to comply with either her request or her son's law, she surrounded the church with soldiers on Palm Sunday. The Saint barricaded himself inside with the faithful, refused to leave, and dared the soldiers to come in and kill him if they willed. The soldiers, however, continued to allow people to

enter, and Ambrose kept the swelling congregation occupied with singing his hymns. The soldiers were reluctant to molest the worshipers, and many joined in singing with the congregation. The stalemate continued until Justina ordered the soldiers withdrawn on Great and Holy Thursday. She was not to challenge Ambrose again.

The following year, after a second, and this time unsuccessful, embassy by Ambrose, Maximus broke his treaty and invaded Italy. The young Valentinian fled with his mother to the protection of Theodosius in the East, and there, Justina breathed her last. Theodosius now marched on Maximus and utterly defeated him in 388. Although Valentinian II was restored to his throne, with the lands of the usurper also under his nominal sway, Theodosius was now the only real power in the Empire. He was often at Milan and came to know Ambrose well and to value his judgment. An incident two years later serves to demonstrate their ultimate relationship.

Now at the height of his power, Theodosius shocked the civilized world by indiscriminately massacring 7,000 – mostly innocent – people at Thessalonica in retaliation for the death of their governor at the hands of a mob in the circus. Immediately upon learning of the outrage Ambrose wrote to Theodosius, *“by my own hand that you too may also read it alone”*, declaring that what he had done at Thessalonica was unparalleled in the history of man, begging him to repent and do penance for the crime, and assuring him that, until he had done so, Ambrose would neither admit him to communion, nor celebrate the Divine Liturgy in his presence. The man history knows as Theodosius the Great bowed before the spiritual authority of the Church, set aside his purple, and did public penance for his sin; St Ambrose received him back into communion at Milan on Christmas Day in 390. In his funeral oration some years later, Ambrose recalled his courage and humility: *That public penance, which private individuals shrink from, an Emperor was not ashamed to perform; nor was there a day afterwards on which he did not grieve for his mistake.*

The Saint was much saddened by the death of Valentinian II at the hands of rebellious military commanders in the spring of 393. Freed from the domination of his mother, and wisely advised by the devout Theodosius, the young Emperor – he was but twenty-one at the time of his murder – had come to accept Catholic orthodoxy, and Ambrose had been en route to Gaul to baptize him when he learned of his death. In his funeral oration Ambrose warmly speaks of him as a martyr, baptized in his own blood.

Eugenius, the usurper put in power by the rebellion, was, in fact, a pagan bent on destroy-

ing Christianity. During his brief reign, Ambrose studiously avoided any confrontation, contriving to be away from Milan whenever the usurper was in residence. His defeat at the hands of Theodosius in September of 394 marked the end of any significant threat the old paganism could mount against the new faith. It was also to be the great Emperor’s final victory.

On January 17, 395, in his fiftieth year, Theodosius I died at Milan with the saintly Bishop at his bedside. Later, in recalling the great man’s virtues to the two sons who now bore his responsibility for the Roman world, St. Ambrose commented: *I loved him, and I am confident the Lord will hear the prayer I send up for his pious soul.*

As Nathan rebuked David,
O most blessed Ambrose,
you reprov'd the pious emperor for his sin
and courageously excluded him
from the holy mysteries;
then, having chastened him
with public penance,
you numbered him again among your flock.

From Vespers for St. Ambrose

During the two years remaining him after the death of his great friend and collaborator, St. Ambrose continued his usual busy pace. When he fell ill and took to his bed, Count Stilicho, the guardian of Honorius, the young Emperor of the West, publicly expressed his

fear: *The day this man dies, destruction hangs over Italy.* That day came on Great and Holy Friday, April 4, 397. He was about fifty-seven years of age. Within fifteen years of the Saint’s death, barbarian tribes had overrun Gaul, penetrated into Italy, and sacked Rome; within eighty, the last political vestiges of the Roman Empire of the West had been swept away.

The Western Church endured. Free of Imperial domination and doctrinally cohesive, she carried the flickering light of civilization into a new age. Much of her inner strength had come through strenuous and indefatigable efforts of the holy Bishop Ambrose, one of the last bright lights of the undivided Church in a time and place of gathering darkness. God grant other such lights in our own darkening days!



Our warm summer continued into mid-September, and then quickly turned into an early fall. The colors – which were more vivid and brilliant than we had seen in many years – peaked around the beginning of October and soon came down during a week of wind and heavy rain. By the time **Jampot** closed its doors on October 13, the inland areas were mostly bare, although here, by the shore, it remained luminously golden.

The last day proved mild and mostly sunny. Traffic began early and persisted throughout the day. Numerous long-time friends and patrons came in to say goodbye and augment their winter hoard, and there were many new faces, as well, family and friends visiting students at Michigan Tech. We began discounting the remaining baked goods in mid-afternoon and had little left by end of day. It proved the fifth busiest day of the year, a fitting close to **Jampot's** best season to date.

But blessings are seldom unmixed; the season had taken its toll. Sales had outpaced production since Independence Day, and by the end of summer the shortfall had caught up with us.

There was little in the way of a post-Labor Day lull, and the few gains we were able to make in inventory were quickly wiped out. In the end, only thirty of our usual seventy or seventy-five varieties of jam remained on hand. We were weary and certainly needed the week's break we always take at season's end. Moreover, as we headed into autumn, the aging infrastructure of our facility finally failed us.

We had long been aware of the inadequacies of the gray water system. It had been in place at the time of our arrival nearly thirty years ago and had seen no improvements. This September we began engineering studies to design its replacement. The health department has given us until spring to install the new system, but it is imperative we do so sooner, given the need to begin production early and the load restrictions which make bringing heavy equipment to our site impossible in early spring.

More distressing is the totally unexpected situation with our water supply. The **Jampot** well was our first major improvement. Though of relatively modest flow, it has served us with fine tasting, pure water for the past twenty-five years. But in late summer it began showing signs of failure, and repeated attempts at remedying the situation have proven unsuccessful. We are faced very soon with the cost of drilling a new well. Meanwhile, we are hauling water from approved sources and have returned to more primitive modes of sterilization, further exacerbating production difficulties.

But we are surviving and gaining on the situation. Production has been caught up, and the flood of early orders fulfilled. Facing the coming busy weeks with confident enthusiasm, we stand ready to serve your personal or gift-giving pleasure with the superb items offered on the following pages.

HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE
Society of St. John
6559 State Highway M26
Eagle Harbor, Michigan 49950
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Thanksgiving

The past year has brought significant blessings and relieved us of a long-standing source of distress. It has seen the clothing of a new member of our monastic community and the continued growth and success of our labors at the **Jampot**. Throughout its course, friends old and new have expressed deep appreciation for the community outreach of our recital series and of our contemplative trail system. We have made progress in some long term endeavors and undertaken several new initiatives. All this bodes well for the future of this still young monastery, and we are profoundly grateful to the Author of all blessings for His continuing providential care.

With these have also come situations, frustrations, and challenges – such as those discussed on page 11 of this issue – that are, perhaps, not so easy to see as blessings. Yet, we must thank God for them, as well, for the ability he has given

us to cope with them, and for the direction they provide – if only we will see it. By means of such trials the spirit is built up; carrying the Cross is ever the road to glory.

As always, then, we approach our national holiday of Thanksgiving with the gratitude that must be a constant in our lives. We thank God for His providence – whatever form it may take – and we make known to all who will hear the mighty deeds He continues to work for us all.

Most especially, we thank Him for you, our friends, patrons, and benefactors. It is you who make possible the continuance of our life on these shores. You are truly agents of His love and generosity. From the depths of our hearts, we thank you for sharing in His divine providence.

May He grant you a peaceful and happy Thanksgiving and a most joyous celebration of His birth.