

# Magnificat

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2015

## Mother of God

Although it ranks fourth among the great feasts in her liturgical calendar – after Pascha, Pentecost, and Theophany – the Church of the Byzantine tradition celebrates Christmas, or, more properly, the **Feast of the Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ**, with great enthusiasm. Exhorting his flock in Antioch to a joyous celebration in the late Fourth Century, St. John Chrysostom described Christmas as *the mother of all feasts, for from the Nativity of Christ, all the other feasts flow like different streams from the same source. This feast justly occupies first place not only because of this, but also because the event which this day commemorates is, of all events, the most worthy of wonder.* Wondrous, indeed!

For this Child, whose birth we celebrate, 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, rests all our hope for peace.

How incredibly marvelous this is, how beautiful beyond telling! With the birth of Christ, God enters and becomes part of His creation. He

What shall we offer You, O Christ,  
who for our sake came on earth as Man?  
Every creature made by You gives You thanks:  
The angels offer hymns of praise, the heavens a star;  
the Magi present their gifts, the shepherds their wonder;  
the earth provides a cave, the wilderness a manger;  
and we, we offer You a mother, a virgin mother.

O God, who are from all eternity,  
have mercy on us.

From Great Vespers of Christmas

whom no one can see and live comes to be seen in the person of a vulnerable, newborn child. He who can do all things accepts the limitations and impoverishment 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 depth and humility of His love. The won-

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparch 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.

drous beauty of this divine condescension causes the angels in heaven to sing so as to be heard on earth. In our joyous celebration of the Feast we seek to join our feeble voices with theirs and to express, in so far as is possible with human words, our own wonder and exultation at this seminal event of our salvation, the birth of Him whose life and teaching, death and resurrection, bring Life and Light to the whole world.

The Byzantine tradition prepares her faithful to celebrate this joy by means of fasting. From November Fifteenth, the day after the Feast of St. Philip, until Christmas, she prescribes abstinence from meat and dairy, and on the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays throughout the period she restricts the number of meals permitted and also proscribes the consumption of fish, wine, and oil. This "Philip's Fast" is also sometimes referred to as "Little Lent", for, while it is of six weeks duration like its pre-Paschal counterpart, it is much less severe in nature. It does not constitute a distinct liturgical season, however; rather, the Byzantine liturgy is in constant preparation for Christmas.

The burden of the Christmas message is that Christ came among us in the flesh. Though conceived in an ineffable manner without a human father, He was truly one of us and like us in every way but sin. Having taken on our human nature, He was born of a woman as were we all. Like us all He came naked into our harsh world with immediate basic human needs for shelter, clothing, and nourishment. Protected by His parents from external danger, He grew in size, wisdom and self-awareness until the time of His mission. In the flesh He endured the various wants and deprivations of our life, and in the flesh He suffered and died for our salvation. In the flesh He also rose from the dead, raising up our fallen nature with Himself, and ultimately seating it with Himself at the right hand of His Father in heaven.

This, then, is what impels our Christmas joy, a joy that is ever close to us throughout the year; for hardly a Service goes by without some reit-

eration of the Christmas message. Remembering that God took flesh entails remembrance of the woman from whom that flesh came. Thus we remember the Virgin Mary and her place in the economy of salvation at all of our Services; our veneration of her as Theotokos, or Mother of God, is intimately bound up with our understanding and worship of her Son.

Early in the Fifth Century, Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople had protested that Mary should not be called the Mother of God since she was the source only of Christ's human nature, not of His divinity; at best, she could be called the mother of Christ. The Fathers of the Third Ecumenical Council, gathered at Ephesus in 431 declared to the contrary: **The word was made flesh!** (Jn. 1:14). Mary had given birth, not to a nature, but to Jesus Christ, whose divine and human natures formed one Person. She had borne the Word of God in the flesh; she was truly and fittingly to be called the Mother of God. To deny her this title is to diminish and impoverish our understanding of Jesus.

Mary is a constant presence in Byzantine piety and worship. But she never stands alone. Our veneration of her flows exclusively from her relationship to her Son and from her instrumental role in His becoming Man. God is pure spirit, immortal, and incapable of suffering. Only by taking flesh could He suffer and die for us. Christ's flesh and His human nature are the instruments through which He worked our salvation, and these He received from His Virgin Mother; through her, then, Salvation, in the Person of Jesus Christ, has come into the world.

The extravagant and hyperbolic language of many of our liturgical texts is a feeble attempt to express in human words the love God has shown for us in Christ Jesus. Mary is the channel through which that love took flesh and entered the world. Knowing that she stands before Him with the boldness of a mother, we beg her intercession for our needs in a continuing spirit of Christmas joy.



# Services, Christmas 2015

Sunday, 20 December 2015 -- 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

Thursday, 24 December 2015 -- 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

Friday, 25 December 2015 -- Christmas Day

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy (Chrysostom)	1) Galatians 4:4-7; 2) Matthew 2:1-12
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Sunday, 27 December 2015 -- Sunday after Christmas - Proto-martyr Stephen

5:30 pm (Saturday)	Great Vespers	1) Genesis 25:21-34; 2) Sirach 7:1-28; 3) Zechariah 8:3-11
10:00 am	Divine Liturgy (Chrysostom)	1) Galatians 1:11-19, Acts 6:8-7:5.47-60; 2) Matthew 2:13-23, Matthew 21:33-42

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

# Messengers of God

As we approach Christmas, references to Christ's birth appear with increasing frequency in the Divine Office, not only in texts devoted to the Blessed Virgin, but in those pertaining to other saints and celebrations of the Menaion (the Service Book for feasts with fixed dates), as well. Thus, as early as the **Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the Heavenly Host**, on November eighth, even before the beginning of the Philip's Fast, we catch growing glimmers of joy from the great celebration yet to come.

The Synaxis of the Archangels originated as a commemoration of the dedication of the great Church of the Archangel Michael near the baths

of Arcadius in Constantinople. Many of the texts proper to the feast still bear the marks of its beginnings; St. Michael is of often invoked by name, and there are occasional

references to his church, as well. But Gabriel is sometimes also addressed, and the majority of the texts have a more general applicability.

Indeed, although they make frequent appearances in the pages of Scripture, angels are seldom identified by name. The Book of Daniel (10:13 & 21; 12:1) briefly mentions Michael as the great prince of the people of God, who stands with them against their enemies; the Epistle of Jude (9) cites a legend about his dispute with Satan over the body of Moses; and Revelation (12:7-9) depicts him casting Satan and his angels out of heaven. Direct references to the Archangel Gabriel are likewise scarce: He aided Daniel in deciphering a vision (Dan. 8:16 ff.) and in under-

standing the prophecy of weeks (Dan. 9:21 ff.), and the Evangelist Luke recounts his annunciations to Zachary (1:11-20) and to the Virgin (1:26-38). St. Matthew (1:20-23) leaves the angel of the annunciation to Joseph anonymous; so, too, in all the other books of Scripture – except for the Book of Tobit (12:15), which is in the Septuagint, but not in the Hebrew canon – the many angels who appear remain nameless.

The name “angel” refers more to a function than to a type of being. *Angelos* is Greek for messenger, and often enough in the Old Testament it is God, Himself (cf. Ex. 3:2 ff.), who conveys the message. Accordingly, the first two readings ap-

pointed for the Vespers of the Feast (Jos. 5:13-15 and Jdg. 6:11-24) assign no name to the Chief Captain of the Host of the Lord who appeared to Joshua at Jericho or to the An-

O champion, captain, and leader,  
 supreme commander and Prince of the Heavenly Host,  
 deliver from all oppression, sorrow, sickness, and grievous sin  
 those who sing your praises and cry out to you, O glorious one;  
 bodiless, you behold the Eternal in unapproachable light  
 and radiate the transcendent glory of the Master,  
 who, in His love for all mankind,  
 for our sake took flesh from the Virgin  
 and willed to save the human race.

From Vespers  
 Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel  
 and all the Heavenly Host

angel of the Lord who summoned Gideon to rescue Israel from the Midianites. Tradition, however, because of their respective missions to uphold God's people against their enemies, tends to identify these heavenly beings with the Archangel Michael (cf. Dan. 12:1). The third reading (Dan. 10:1-21), as prescribed by the Greek Menaion, does mention him by name and vaguely reports him as contending with the forces of various nations in behalf of the Jewish people.

The Slavic tradition draws the third reading at Vespers from the Prophet Isaiah (14:6-20), and here we encounter a more cosmic aspect of angelic mission. Rejoicing at the coming fall of Babylon, the Prophet compares its king to Lucifer

(Satan) cast down from heaven after attempting to put himself in the place of God. In the Gospel reading appointed for the Divine Liturgy of the feast (Lk. 10:16-21), Jesus reports having seen Satan fall like lightning from heaven, an event tradition identifies with the climax of the great war in heaven described in the Book of Revelation (12:7-12) when Michael and his angels cast Satan and his minions down to earth. But Jesus is higher than the angels, as the Epistle reading (Heb. 2:2-10) tells us, and He has given His disciples power over all the forces of the Enemy so that nothing will ever harm them. The parable of the tares and wheat (Mt. 13:24-30; 36-43), which we hear at Matins, describes evil doers as the work of the Enemy; the angels will separate them from the righteous at the end of time and consign them to the flames.

From similarly brief and enigmatic references in Scripture and various apocalyptic traditions current in Palestine and the Jewish Diaspora at the time of Christ and shortly thereafter, Christianity developed its own insights into the nature and function of angelic beings. The poetic texts and hymns of the feast provide a sort of epitome of the Church's teaching concerning the Heavenly Host.

Surrounded by incomprehensible, unfailing, and uncreated light, God exists from all eternity in an ineffable communion of love as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Origin of goodness and love, He did not remain wrapped in self-contemplation, but, desiring to share His light and love, He brought the entire universe from nothingness into being. Before making the visible, material world, He created the unseen realm of immaterial angelic beings. These heavenly incorporeal powers are lesser lights, reflecting the uncreated light of God, in whose presence they stand, offering endless hymns of praise, finding sustenance and the very ground of their being in contemplation of His inexpressible glory.

In our worship here on earth, we are privileged some small share in this divine contemplation. Like the heavenly beings Isaiah (6:-14) saw

in vision, we, too, with great solemnity sing the thrice-holy hymn (cf. Divine Liturgy: Cherubic Hymn) in praise of the Lord of Hosts; and when we pray (cf. Divine Liturgy: Prayer of the Little Entrance) that the angels may enter and join with us in praising the Lord's goodness, we know that the prayer is heard and granted. Though bodiless, their presence is almost palpable, and we can sense their special care for us.

Angels are immortal spiritual intelligences. Unbounded by constraints of time and space, they fly about the world doing God's bidding and conveying messages to men. The Lord has given them a special charge over the world, assigning to each nation (cf. Dan. 10:13; 20) and each human being (cf. Mt. 18:10) a particular angel to be its light and guard. Thus, intimately concerned with the lives of men and their worldly, as well as spiritual, affairs, angels are uniquely poised as powerful intercessors on our behalf before the Throne of Glory.

Certainly, we need their help more than ever. The Gospels are replete with references to demons and their activity in the world; not all of them can be explained away as deriving from primitive notions of disease or mental illness. We are left with a very real sense of evil, present and powerfully active in this world, of which Satan is still the Prince. We are called to resist, to struggle against *the rulers of the darkness of this world* (Eph. 6:12).

To be sure, the demons and darkness are mostly within. Our own sins of pride, lust, arrogance, and greed are what drag us down to destruction. The Enemy sows them in our hearts and minds, and it is here we must work first of all to stop them, to *bring every thought into captivity and make it obedient to Christ* (2 Cor. 10:5).

Yet, evil is also very much abroad in this world. And in our own time and place we have seen its quickening advance. All around us the darkness deepens. Often we seem nearly overwhelmed. We trust in the ultimate triumph of Christ, and, so as not to be lost, ourselves, we beg the Archangels' heavenly protection.

Η ΓΥΝΑΖΙΣ ΤΩΝ ἈΓΓΕΛΩΝ



ΣΕΝΙΣ  
Τὸ δὲ χρὸ τὸ θεὸν  
+ Ποικίλτος Μοναχὸς  
1111 Θεοφῶτος Πάτριος

Χεῖρ  
+ Μανδύλης Μοναχὸς  
1111 Θεοφῶτος Πάτριος

# The Beauty of His House

On the afternoon of Sunday, November 8, 2015, we dedicated the first of the murals to adorn our monastic church. A modest number of friends from the local community joined the monks for the brief prayer service and for the reception and open house that followed. Installation of the seven by eleven foot canvas marks the next stage in the ongoing project of beautifying the church, and its formal dedication made a particularly fitting close to our celebration of the Synaxis of the Archangels this year.

Against the background of a nighttime sky illumined by the star of Bethlehem, the mural depicts the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, along with Raphael, who revealed himself in the Book of Tobit (12:15) as *one of the seven holy angels who go in and out before the glory of the Holy One and present the prayers of the saints*. Though pure spirits and, therefore, bodiless, they are portrayed in human form, for so they often appeared when conveying messages to men. Their wings symbolize their swift and constant readiness to carry out God's will, and, as members of the Heavenly Host, they are shown clad in military garb.

Raphael, whose name means **God Has Healed**, appears clothed as a traveler. He remains in this guise throughout the Book of Tobit as he guides young Tobias on his journey and brings God's deliverance and healing to Tobit and Sarah. His traveler's staff takes the form of a caduceus, indicating his special care for those engaged in healing ministries, as well as his conveyance of God's healing to Tobit. With his left hand he points to the fish that provided the heart and liver, the smoke from the burning of which delivered Sarah from the assaults of a demon,

and the gall, which cured Tobit of his blindness. For healing, even by means of earthly medicine, comes ultimately from God. As well as being traditionally seen as the protector of sojourners and physicians, because of his agency in bringing Tobias and Sarah together, he is often invoked by those seeking a loving marriage and a godly spouse.

Gabriel, **Strength of God**, is pre-eminently the Angel of the Annunciation, who identified himself to Zachary (Lk. 1:19) as one *who stand(s) in the presence of God*. He stands here closest to the Star and with his feet planted firmly on rock, for his message brings light and joy to all

the earth. In his left hand he holds an icon of the Theotokos of the Sign, indicating the Incarnation of the Son of God, and with his right he grips a staff surmounted by a lily, symbol of peace - and a subtle reminder of his role (in very recent tradition) of sounding

The Intelligence, which is from all eternity,  
has appointed you a second light, O Gabriel,  
reflecting His splendor upon all the earth;  
you announced to us the great and divine mystery,  
which had been hidden from before time began:  
that the almighty, eternal, and incorporeal God  
would be made flesh in the Virgin's womb  
and come as Man to save mankind.

From Vespers  
Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel  
and all the Heavenly Host

the Last Trumpet (cf. Rev. 8:2-5). Christian tradition considers him the angel of mercy and consolation, and, in our day, he is sometimes held as a special protector and guide for those engaged in the work of electronic communications.

Clad in splendid armor and bearing a shimmering sword, the Archangel Michael, **Who Is Like God?**, dominates the center of the painting. Champion of justice and angel of righteousness, he raises up an image of Man clothed in the white robe of Baptism, while casting into hell Satan (cf. Rev.12:7-9) and the angels who serve him. Upholder of God's People of both Old and New Covenants, he is invoked in time of warfare, both physical and spiritual, and to rescue souls from the clutches of the Devil, especially at the moment of death. A powerful ally in the



struggle against evil, we call upon him after each Service in this holy monastery; we see his help as needed, more than ever, in our day.

Beneath his feet lurks – with no great subtlety – the fallen angel, Lucifer, the Devil, Satan, Angel of the Bottomless Pit, and Prince of this World. He has been conquered (cf. Jn. 12:31), but not yet annihilated. He sees that his time is short (cf. Rev. 12:12), and in his wrath he seeks our destruction. Having no real power over us – unless we give in to him – he employs deception, flattery, and seduction to bend us to his will; he beckons us to join him in the everlasting flames; it would be all too easy to succumb.

The mural hangs on the west end of the north wall of the monastic church, directly over the

Wherever your grace casts its shadow,  
 O Captain and Archangel Michael,  
 the Devil is driven out,  
 for Lucifer, the fallen morning star,  
 cannot bear to behold your light.  
 We, therefore, beg you to quench  
 the fiery darts he casts against us  
 and deliver us from his temptations.

From Matins  
 Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel  
 and all the Heavenly Host

door through which the monks pass daily going to and from their Services. It is directly opposite the great doors of the nave, and is most likely the first thing visitors will see upon entering the church. And immediately it should pose a challenge.

The upper part of the painting - indeed, its far greater part - is calm and peaceful, its holy angels serenely powerful and suffused with the light of Christ's coming among us as Man. But inevitably the eye is drawn to the lurid image of Satan, with his hellfire and beckoning hand. To which do we devote our attention?

God grant to all who humbly pray and meditate before this image of His holy Archangels the grace of right choices in this life and eternal glory in the world to come.



## From the Jampot

Our cool, dry, and less than bountiful summer eased into an outstandingly beautiful fall. The days remained dry, but were warmer than we are accustomed to in September and October. The color arrived late and developed slowly, peaking about a week before **Jampot** closed its doors for the season. Contrary to our fears that the dry summer would result in muted and brief color, it proved vivid and long lasting, remaining strong up until we closed the shop on the seventeenth of October.

Sales remained strong, as well. The first Saturday in October counted up, by a small margin, to be the busiest day we had yet seen, and it took us almost all of the following week to rebuild our stock for the next onslaught. As expected, the combination of peak color and Michigan Tech's Parent's Weekend resulted in a second Saturday that decisively shattered the record set a week before. On both days the line formed early and remained until closing, but all was orderly; people never crowded into the shop and the new entry curved the queue away from traffic and toward the parking lot. Certainly the pleasant weather and glorious color reinforced everyone's patience and good humor. Although the weather cooled and we experienced a little

snow before the end, the color hung on, sales continued at a moderate pace, and **Jampot** finished its season showing a seventeen percent increase over last year.

We are told that most businesses in the area also experienced good seasons this year. Certainly, there seemed to have been more visitors than before. But, in our case, the increase was also, in some measure, due to increased product availability. The new production area allowed us to keep bark, brittle, and caramels on the shelf as never before, and to offer a greater variety of chocolates than ever in the past. Moreover, it has precipitated an entirely new product line.

The roaster was one of the last pieces of equipment to arrive and be installed in the new building. Ostensibly it was for roasting nuts to be used in confections, but it could also do coffee. We tried coffee first; the machine has yet to roast a nut. After a good deal of – truly enjoyable – product testing, we began offering bags of fresh-roasted, whole bean coffee at the shop. Sales proved brisk during the final weeks of the season. Consult the following pages for information concerning its availability – and that of many other delectable items – for your personal enjoyment and holiday gift-giving.

## Coffee

Although many roasters choose to emphasize blends, we have chosen to focus exclusively upon rare and exceptional single origin varietal coffees. We have chosen four single origin coffees(SO) each of which is grown on various small farms in a specified region within a given country and five single estate coffees(SE) each of which comes from one single farm. We normally offer **Whole Bean** coffee; if you wish to receive your coffee already ground, please specify **Drip Grind** or **French Press** on the order form.

### Peru

La Llama Organic (SO)  
 Varietal: Typica, Bourbon, Caturra  
 Roast: Full City (Medium)

### Ethiopia

Yirgacheffe (SO)  
 Varietal: Mixed Heirloom  
 Roast: City (Light)

### Kenya

Naragoto AA (SO)  
 Varietal: SL-28, SL-34  
 Roast: Full City (Medium)

### Indonesia

Sumatra Lintong Mutu Batak (SO)  
 Varietal: Ateng, Jember, Garundang  
 Roast: Vienna (Dark)

### El Salvador

Santa Emilia Estate Black Honey (SE)  
 Varietal: Bourbon  
 Roast: City (Light)

### Costa Rica

La Minita Estate (SE)  
 Varietal: Caturra, Typica, Red and Yellow Catuai  
 Roast: Full City (Medium)

### Guatemala

Finca La Esperanza (SE)  
 Varietal: Pacamara  
 Roast: City (Light)

1 lb. bags \$15.00 (2 lbs.)

## Platinum Reserve

### Costa Rica

La Candelilla Tarrazú Estate (SE)  
 Varietal: Geisha  
 Roast: City+ (Medium-Light)

### Guatemala

Finca El Zapote (SE)  
 Varietal: Geisha  
 Roast: City+ (Medium-Light)

1/2 lb. bags \$20.00 (1 lb.)



HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE  
Society of St. John  
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# Thanksgiving

November gales always bring back a flood of memories. We arrived on this shore in late summer, and the ensuing golden days of that first wonder-filled autumn some thirty-two years ago quickly descended into a harrowingly bitter winter. Indeed, our very ability to survive in this place came sometimes into question. But the enforced confinement, as we weathered the storms and survived the cold, brought a focus and sense of peace we find often elusive today.

Nostalgia is selective in its recollection, of course, and we would not go back to the way it was. The simplicity of mere survival remains, gratefully, a thing of the past. The crises and difficulties of the years since have all ultimately worked for the monastery's good. We know that growth comes through trial – Salvation through the Cross – and we trust in the Lord's love and mercy as we face those yet ahead. Still, we are immensely grateful that we see nothing on the horizon.

We descend into our thirty-third winter on this blessed shore at peace with our neighbors, free of contention and litigation, and with no major development projects in hand. In the months to come we expect only normal worries: fulfilling the Christmas rush, the usual financial concerns, providing for guests, catching up on communications... Outside of prayer, we will devote our energies to planning, organizing, and finding ways to better utilize the blessings already received. We know that trials are not at an end, and we will likely undertake more development next summer, but we thank God for the intervening months of peace.

We pray your winter will be peaceful, as well. May the Lord grant you security and good health, and may He ease any hardships you may encounter. You are one of the Lord's greatest blessings to us, and we hold you in prayer during this time of peace. God grant you a happy Thanksgiving, a merry Christmas, and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.