Christmas Eve Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
Sunday Before the Nativity

Sunday, December 24, 2023

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
250 Gallows Hill Road, Westfield, New Jersey 07090

Live streaming services - 908.233.8533 - www.holytrinitywestfield.org

Rev. Fr. Peter Delvizis, Parish Priest
On the Sunday before the Nativity, we celebrate all those who from ages past have been well-pleasing to God, from Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos according to the Genealogy as recorded in the Gospel according to St. Luke; On December 24 we celebrate our Righteous Mother St. Evgenia and those with her.

**Fourth Tone  Ηχος Δ’**

**Apolytikion of the Resurrection:** “Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord has shown the mighty power of His arm. He has trampled down death by death, becoming the firstborn of the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of hell and has granted to all the world His great mercy.”

**Apolytikion of the Forefeast:** “As she carried in her womb* what she conceived without seed,* Mary went to Bethlehem* with elder Joseph to enroll,* for they were of the house and the lineage of David.* The time arrived for her* to give birth to her Child;* but then there was no place* in the inn for them.* Therefore the cave served as a luxurious* royal palace for the Queen.* And Christ the Lord is born, to raise the image* which was formerly fallen.”

**Apolytikion of the Holy Fathers:** “Great are the achievements of faith! In the fountain of flame, as by the water of rest, the Three Holy Children rejoiced. And the Prophet Daniel proved a shepherd of lions as of sheep. By their intercessions, O Christ God, save our souls.

**Apolytikion of the Church:** “Blessed are You, O Christ our Lord and God, You who made all wise the fishermen Your Apostles, sending down upon them Your Spirit, which is Holy and through their work drawing the world into Your net, glory to You Who loves mankind.”

**Kontakion:** “On this day the Virgin* comes to the cave to give birth to* God the Word ineffably,* Who was before all the ages.* Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing* the gladsome tidings;* with the angels and the shepherds now glorify Him* Who is willing to be gazed on* as a young Child Who* before the ages is God.”

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**Click links for Scripture Readings**

- **Morning Gospel:** St. John 20:1-10
- **Epistle Reading:** Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40
- **Gospel Reading:** St. Matthew 1:1-25

[Click links for Scripture Readings]
**Liturgical Schedule**

Monday, Dec. 25, **The Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ**, Orthros, 8:30 AM; Divine Liturgy, 9:30 AM

Sunday, Dec. 31, **Sunday after the Nativity**, Orthros, 8:15 AM; Divine Liturgy, 9:30 AM

Monday, Jan. 1, **Naming of the Lord/Feast Day of St. Basil the Great**, Orthros, 8:30 AM; Divine Liturgy, 9:30 AM

Friday, Jan. 5, **Eve of Theophany**; Royal Hours of Theophany, Orthros, 8:30 AM; Divine Liturgy, 9:30 AM & Lesser Blessing of the Waters, 10:30 AM

Saturday, Jan. 6, **Holy Theophany**; Orthros, 8:30 AM; Divine Liturgy, 9:30 AM with Greater Blessing of Waters

Sunday, Jan. 7, **St. John the Baptist**; Orthros, 8:15 AM; Divine Liturgy, 9:30 AM

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**CHRISTMAS EVE Altar Donations**

**Altar Candles**: In Loving Memory of Ann Soppas†; **Vigil Light**: In Memory of Euphrosyne Levas†; **Large Candles**: In Loving Memory of our beloved Mom & Yiayia Mary Vasilow†, from Chrissy, Tony, Louis, Angel, Kate, George, Mary, John, George, Chris, Chris, and Sophia

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**Sacraments and Rites**

**Funeral**: On Friday, December 22, the funeral service for Constantine “Gus” Zades † was held. Eternal be his memory.

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**The Nativity in the Flesh of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ - December 25**

The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints Basil the Great

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Χριστός γένναται. Δοξάσατε!

**Apolytikion of the Nativity**

“Your birth, O Christ our God, did shine upon the world. And through the light of wisdom illumined the universe. And to those who held the stars in worship did through a star learn to worship You the Sun of Righteousness and came to know You the Light from on high. Glory to You, O Lord!”

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!”

- Luke 2:8-10

**Christmas Morning Readings**

**Morning Gospel**: St. Matthew 1:18-25

**Epistle Reading**: Galatians 4:4-7

**Gospel Reading**: St. Matthew 2:1-12
CHRISTMAS DAY Altar Donations

Altar Candles: In Loving Memory of Spyros Sikaras†
Kandili: In Loving Memory of Spyros Sikaras†

AGAPE FUND Christmas Collection - OCMC SAMP
The Support a Mission Priest Program (SAMP) of OCMC provides a subsidy to help priests in the Orthodox Church of Africa (Patriarchate of Alexandria) share the Faith, care for their communities, and provide for their families. Being mindful of the giving-spirit during Christmas and in support of those who serve the Church as priests, Holy Trinity is excited to help spread the message of Christ in Africa while assisting this program of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. The AGAPE Fund is a special fund taken each year on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Please make checks payable to Holy Trinity and with “SAMP” written in the memo. For more info contact OCMC.com/samp

Special Christmas Gifts
At Christmastime, you may desire to express your love for Holy Trinity by offering special gifts such as communion wine, festal icons, incense, charcoal, pew torch candles, daily Bible guides, holy water bottles, poinsettia plants, and wreaths that can be donated in memory of or for the health of loved ones. Please call the office. Thank you for your generosity.

Holy Trinity Bookstore
The Holy Trinity Bookstore is open. Visit for Christmas cards and meaningful small gifts.

Welcome Visitors
We welcome all visitors to our parish. We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us. If you are looking for a spiritual home, we hope that you will become part of our family. Fr. Peter would very much like to meet you. Please visit the Philoxenia/Fellowship table in the Bouras Center after services to meet parishioners and enjoy our Fellowship Hour.

Metropolis of New Jersey Facebook Page
His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos wishes to inform all that the Metropolis has created a new Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey Facebook Page. Please visit and follow this page and share the link with fellow parishioners. www.facebook.com/people/Greek-Orthodox-Metropolis-of-New-Jersey/

Christ is born! Glorify Him!
Christmastime at Holy Trinity requires many helping hands working in unison to present the faithful with a celebration that is joyful and spiritually uplifting. It is fitting for us to take a moment to thank those who minister and serve with love and devotion. With gratitude, we thank:

- Our liturgist and parish priest, our Proistamenos Father Peter Delvizis, and Father John Alexandrou who concelebrates on Sundays and Special Feast Days.
- The Parish Council: Penny Mavridis Sales, Parish Council President, and the entire Board.

- The Psaltes & Reader: Pascalis Kuvalakis, Anthony Pantagis, and Lia Lewis. - The Choir Dir. and Organist: Kathryn Athanasoulas and Phyllis Verenes, and all members of the choir.

- The Acolytes: Nicholas Sikellis, head acolyte, and the faithful young acolytes who serve at the altar.

- The Decorating Committee: Elise Savnik, Avi Kiriakatis, Marina LoAlbo, Despina O’Neill, & Ellen Manos, and all who donated poinsettias and wreaths.

- The Office Staff: Diana Waltsak, Kathy Genakos; and the Office Volunteers.

- Religious Education: Pete Markos, Director; Iris Love, Assistant Director; and the faithful teachers who share their love and knowledge of the faith with the students; Christmas Program: Pete Markos and Despina Apostolou.

- Angel and Mitten Trees: Lexi Kiriakatis and Elise Savnik, Coordinators, and the committee for their help; and the generous and loving parishioners of Holy Trinity who participate.

- The Ladies Philoptochos: Maria Kanaras, President, and the entire Board and members.

- The Greek School: Stavroula A. Mergoupis, Director, and all the faithful teachers.

- Elise Savnik, for organizing pastry packaging for the homebound throughout the year.

- Building and Maintenance: Special thanks to George Colonias, Notis Kotsolios, Beatriz and David Ramirez.

- To the Faithful and beloved Stewards of our Holy Church: your commitment and zeal add to your good works, generosity, and acts of love.

Holy Trinity thanks all the parishioners for their faithful efforts to make Christmas special and a sacred time for sharing and praising our Lord.
Most honorable brother hierarchs,

Beloved children in the Lord,

With the grace of God, we are once again this year celebrating in chant, hymn, and spiritual song the Nativity according to the flesh of the pre-eternal Son and Word of God, namely the manifestation of the mystery of God and humankind. According to St. Nicholas Cabasilas, what occurs in the Divine Liturgy is “the mystagogy of the Lord’s incarnation,” while its introductory acclamation “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” is evidence “that it is through the Lord’s incarnation that people first learned that God is three persons.”¹ The same saintly Father proclaims that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was the first and only to demonstrate the authentic and perfect human being, concerning His ethos, life, and everything else.²

The assumption of human nature in the person of the Son and Word of God, along with the opening of the way of human deification through grace, add unsurpassable value to humankind. Forgetting this truth leads to the diminishment of respect for the human person. The denial of the supreme destiny of human beings does not only liberate them, but also leads to diverse reductions and divisions. Without being conscious of their divine origin and their hope for eternity, humans struggle to remain human and are unable to handle the contradictions of the “human condition.”

¹ On the Divine Liturgy XII, PG 150.392D.
² On the Life of Christ VI, PG 150.680C.
The Christian perception of human existence provides a solution to problems created by violence, war, and injustice in our world. Respect for the human person, peace, and justice are gifts from God; however, establishing the peace that comes from Christ demands the participation and cooperation of human beings. The Christian view on the struggle for peace lies in the words of Christ our Savior, who proclaims peace, addressing His disciples with the greeting “Peace be with you” and encouraging us to love our enemies.³ The revelation in Christ is called the “gospel of peace.”⁴

This means that, for us Christians, the way to peace is through peace and that non-violence, dialogue, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation have priority before other forms of resolving differences. The theology of peace is clearly described in the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s document *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (2020):

“Nothing is more contrary to God’s will for His creatures fashioned in His image and likeness than violence one against another . . . We may justly say that violence is sin *par excellence*. It is the perfect contradiction of our created nature and our supernatural vocation to seek union in love with God and our neighbour . . . Peace is a real revelation of the still deeper reality of creation as God intends it and as God fashioned it in his eternal counsels.”⁵

Peace cannot be taken for granted; it is not self-evident. It is an obligation, an achievement, and an incessant struggle to preserve it. There are no automatic solutions or permanent recipes. In the face of ongoing threats to peace, we need to have vigilance and willingness to resolve problems through dialogue. The great heroes of politics are the champions of peace. As for us, we continue to underline the peacemaking role of religion. This is during a time when religions are criticized for nurturing fanaticism and violence “in the name of God” instead of being forces of peace, solidarity, and reconciliation. However, this indicates an alienation of religious faith and not an integral part of it. Genuine faith in God is the harshest critic of religious fanaticism. Religions are the natural allies of all human beings who strive for peace, justice, and the preservation of creation from human destruction.

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³ Cf. Mt. 5:44
⁴ Eph. 6:44
⁵ § 42, 43 and 44.
This year, the world honours the 75th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (December 10, 1948), constituting a summary of fundamental humanitarian ideals and values, “the shared standard, to which all peoples and all nations should aim.” Human rights, whose central point of focus includes the protection of human dignity with its individual, social, cultural, economic, and ecological conditions, are only understood in their original dynamics if they are acknowledged as the basis and criterion of global peace, associating it with freedom and justice. In this sense, the future of human rights and peace is also linked to the contribution of religions in the matter of respecting them and making them a reality.

With these thoughts and festive sentiments, in full conviction that the life of the Church in itself comprises resistance against inhumanity, wherever such inhumanity arises, we invite all of you to the good fight of constructing a culture of peace and solidarity, where people will see in the face of their fellow human beings a brother or sister and a friend, rather than a threat and enemy. Moreover, we remind you all, dear brother Hierarchs and children, that Christmas is a time of self-consciousness and thanksgiving, of the revelation of the difference between the God-man and “man-god,” of the realization of the “great miracle” of freedom in Christ and of the healing of the “great wound” of alienation from God. Finally, we kneel respectfully before Mary, the Mother of God, who bears in her arms the incarnate Word, and we convey to you the blessing of the Mother Holy Great Church of Christ, wishing you an auspicious, healthy, fruitful, peaceful, and joyous new year of the Lord’s favour.

Christmas 2023

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople

Your fervent supplicant of all before God
THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

December 25

When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4) to save the human race. And when nine months were fulfilled from the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel had appeared to the Most-holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying, “Rejoice, thou that art highly favored … behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son” (Luke 1:28, 31), at that time there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the people of the Roman Empire should be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and be registered. That is why the righteous Joseph came with the Most-holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal lineage of David. Since many people descended on this small town for the census, Joseph and Mary were unable to find lodging in any house, and they sought shelter in a cave which shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave, on the night between Saturday and Sunday, on the 25th of December, the Most-holy Virgin gave birth to the Saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Giving birth to Him without pain just as He was conceived without sin by the Holy Spirit and not by man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, worshiped Him as God, and laid Him in a manger. Then the righteous Joseph drew near and worshiped Him as the Divine Fruit of the Virgin's womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshiped Him as the Messiah and Saviour. The shepherds heard a multitude of God's angels singing: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). At that time three wise men arrived from the east, led by a wondrous star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. They worshipped Him as the King of kings, and offered Him their gifts (Matthew 2). Thus entered the world He Whose coming was foretold by the prophets, and Who was born in the same manner in which it had been prophesied: of a Most-holy Virgin, in the town of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no king in Jerusalem of the lineage of Judah, but rather when Herod, a foreigner, was reigning. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind, which could not be performed by His servants. To Him be eternal glory and praise! Amen.

REFLECTION

The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshipped by shepherds and wise men (astrologers) from the east. He was worshipped by both the simplest and the wisest of this world. Even today, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Saviour are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Perverted simplicity and half-learned wisdom were always the enemies of Christ's divinity and His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the east? This question was especially studied by St. Dimitri of Rostov. He claims that they were kings of certain smaller regions or individual towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were erudite in the knowledge of astronomy. This wondrous star appeared to them, which announced the birth
of the New King. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared to them nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus, i.e., at the time of His conception by the Most-holy Theotokos. They spent nine months studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in traveling. They arrived in Bethlehem shortly after the birth of the Saviour of the world.

One of them was called Melchior. He was old, with long white hair and beard. He offered the Lord the gift of gold.

The second was called Caspar, of ruddy face, young and beardless. He offered the Lord the gift of frankincense.

The third was called Balthasar, of dark complexion and a very heavy beard. He offered the Lord the gift of myrrh.

After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan, and from Milan to Cologne. It can be added that these three wise men were representatives of the three main races of men that descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Persian represented the Japhethites, the Arabian represented the Semites, and the Egyptian represented the Hamites. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshiped the Incarnate Lord and God.

**Reading the Communion Prayers - Pages 60-63 of Divine Liturgy Book**

In Her wisdom, the Church provides beautiful prayers to say before and after receiving Holy Communion. These prayers are part of our Eucharistic preparation which also includes a complete fast in the morning (i.e., nothing by mouth) before receiving the Precious Gifts. As these prayers are read by the clergy in the altar, the faithful should join in at the same time by reading them silently. These Communion Prayers speak to us about faith and forgiveness; humility and cleansing of sins; and a feeling of unworthiness in the presence of the Almighty God. Finally, they reveal the benefits of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. The conclusion of these prayers is seen in the priest who asks for forgiveness from his co-celebrants in the altar and then from the entire congregation. In like manner, each of us must ask for forgiveness from our brethren before approaching the Holy Chalice.
As Christian Stewards we are called to give back to God from the “first fruits” of our labor. We do this in large part by supporting Our Church, Our Spiritual Home. Each year during this time, I ask you to support our parish and her ministries in an intentional and meaningful way. We can do this by offering the first and the best of our fruits!

The 2024 Christian Stewardship Cards have been mailed to all Stewards of Holy Trinity. If you did not receive it, please pick up a card from the church or call the church office to receive it by mail.

Thank you for your stewardship of time, talent, and treasure!

Click here to complete your 2024 Stewardship Commitment Card online.

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
250 Gallows Hill Road, Westfield, NJ 07090 • Tel. (908) 233-8533 • www.HolyTrinityWestfield.org

“Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant”

2024 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD

The operating expenses of our Church for the year 2024 are estimated to be $939,200 (or an estimated $2,200 per family).

In gratitude for God’s blessings, I/we pledge to contribute for Christ’s work at Holy Trinity Church in 2024 a total amount of:

☐ $2,200 ☐ $3,000 ☐ $2,000 ☐ $1,000 ☐ Young Adults (25-30) $500 ☐ Other $____________

For additional information on Legacy or Planned Giving including donations of property, stock, or other securities, please contact the church office (908) 233-8533 or email HolyTrinity@higocnj.org (see enclosed Stock/Security Donation Form)

Name_________________________ Spouse’s Name_________________________

Names of Dependents __________________________ __________________________

Address __________________________ __________________________

City __________________________ State _______ Zip __________

Signature__________________________ Date________________________

Email Address________________________ Telephone Number (_________)

Cell Number (_________)

Please bring your Commitment Card to Stewardship Sunday Liturgy, on Sunday November 19, 2023

To vote or seek elective office in the administration of the parish in 2024, your signed Stewardship Commitment Card must be received by March 1, 2024
Altar Boys
Fr. Peter invites all boys ages 12 and older to commit to service in the altar. An acolyte plays an integral part in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and other services. Please speak to Fr. Peter to assist in this capacity. To serve the Lord in this way is a great privilege and honor.

Holy Trinity offers numerous youth programs, including GOYA, JOY/HOPE, Greek Dance and TOTS.

GOYA (Greek Orthodox Youth of America) is the ministry to teenagers for the purpose of fellowship, worship, service, and witness. New members in grades 6-12 are welcome at any time. 6th graders may participate in Westfield only activities and 7-12th (ages 12-18) may participate in statewide activities. Activities include Christ Encounter Retreat, athletics, outreach, Greek dance, Sights & Sounds (performing and visual arts), and many others! Register at https://tinyurl.com/53pp88nz

GOYA Advisors: Maria Tarhanidis, Mary Carayannopoulos, Sophia Saketos, Catherine Kelly, Andy Zotos, and Christine Skalkotos. Please contact an advisor or email goya@htgocnj.org with any questions.

GOYA Sights and Sounds - Seeking Vocal Coach
Stewardship opportunity of Time and Talent! We are looking for a vocal coach to work with the GOYA singing groups as they prepare for Sights and Sounds. If you can help, please contact Maria Tarhanidis at mvtarhanidis@gmail.com or stop by the GOYA table.

Religious Education Christmas Pageant – Sunday, December 24
Stewardship opportunity to help with the annual Christmas Pageant on Sunday morning, December 24! To help, participate or volunteer, visit https://forms.gle/QreKzrVfFo1JKrSH8

Joy/Hope and all Holy Trinity Youth
Please join us for Holy Epiphany Divine Liturgy with Great Blessing of Waters on Saturday, January 6. We will meet in the Bouras Center at 10 AM and enter the church as a group for the service at 10:15 AM. After service, we will cut a vasilopita to ring in the New Year and make Valentine's Day Cards for our Holy Trinity Seniors. Please RSVP to Kathy at 201-344-4049 or at joyhopehtgoc@yahoo.com.
Angel Tree Ornaments
Personalized ornaments for the Angel Tree are available for $10. Proceeds to benefit Religious Education. Please contact Elise Savnik at 908-337-5046.

2023 Angel Tree
and
Mitten Tree
Sponsored by Religious Education

Please continue to sponsor these wonderful Holy Trinity Christmas traditions and help our local children in need.

The 34th Annual Christmas Gifting Program will benefit Moms Helping Moms helping underserved families in NJ
We will be collecting:
Diapers
Wipes
New, unused baby clothes
(0-5T Fall/Winter only at this time)
New, unused books for ages 0-5
Other essential baby items
(NEW items only)

The 34th Annual Mitten Tree
What to Do?
1. Purchase new mittens, gloves, knit hats or SOCKS in adult and children’s sizes.
2. Hang them on the Mitten Tree starting December 3rd.

DROP OFF DEADLINE:
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24TH
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!
The Ladies Philoptochos Society of Holy Trinity

VASILOPITA LUNCHEON
&
STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

January 21, 2024
Immediately following Divine Liturgy, Bouras Center
Proceeds to benefit the Saint Basil Academy

THE ST. BASIL CHILDREN WILL BE JOINING US FOR THE LUNCHEON
PLEASE SUPPORT US!

OPEN SEATING
RESERVATIONS DEADLINE BY JANUARY 14, 2024

ADULTS- $25/ CHILDREN 12 & under- $20
Includes: Buffet Lunch, Salad, Wine & Dessert

Please mail or stop @ Philoptochos table to sign up
Kathy Maglaras & Debra Vlahakis, Co-chairs

RESERVATION FORM

Name: ___________________________ Phone: ___________________________

Email: ___________________________ # Adults _______ # Children _______

Amt Enclosed: _______ Check #_____ Cash_____ Credit Card_____ Zelle_____

Zelle: treasurer@htphiloptochos.com

Checks Payable to: The Ladies Philoptochos Society of Holy Trinity

Send to: Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
250 Gallow Hill Rd Westfield, NJ 07091
When mailing, mark envelope “Attn: V”
***SAVE THE DATE***

Community Communion Sunday
with breakfast in the Bouras Center to follow

All are encouraged to invite their godparents and godchildren and join in fellowship and faith in receiving Communion as a community.

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
February 11, 2024

*Sponsored by Holy Trinity Religious Education*
June 23-29, 2024

CAMP GOOD SHEPHERD

The Metropolis Summer Camp program will take place in the summer of 2024 from June 23-29. Registration will be forthcoming. This is an excellent opportunity for children to meet other Greek Orthodox and to learn about the faith in a protected environment.
GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS

* AMEN *

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