



Saint Luke Serbian Orthodox Church ✠ Српска Православна Црква Светог Луке

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At Christmas 2023

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ,
Who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as a man?
Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks:
the Angels offer a hymn; the heavens, a star;
the Wise Men, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder;
the earth, its cave; the wilderness, a manger,
and we offer Thee a virgin Mother!//
O Pre-eternal God, have mercy on us!

Sticheron the Vespers of Nativity

Dear brothers and sisters,

As we prepare to once again celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we marvel at the depth and magnitude of the Divine love, who although pre-eternal God decided to enter into His creation and become a little child born in great humility. Here we begin to understand the statement of Saint John the Evangelist when he simply says that God *is* love (1 John 4:8). And, o marvel, God does not ask from us anything in return but to have the same love for His creation and creatures!

In this blessed season of Nativity, we remember how symbolically all peoples offered to the newly born Christ the best of what they had: people from the East offered gold, myrrh, and frankincense, the Hellenic people offered their philosophy, Romans offered to him their order and discipline, but we Serbs also offered to God the best of what we had – our big heart.

Despite the many difficulties in our history, we always managed to express our love for God and for the neighbor. Looking at our long and venerable history, we see that as a people we knew how to be humane, how to sacrifice for God, our faith, our freedom, honor, and justice. The countless churches and monasteries throughout the Serbian lands are an eternal witness to our love for God. We marvel at the magnificent beauty of our ancient churches and are proud to learn about our ancestors who built them and left them to us as a lasting memorial.

We, however, the Serbian community of Washington, DC, are grateful to God that we have been elected to follow in the steps of our great ancestors and build a church as a lasting memorial of our generation. That is a rare and great honor bestowed upon us, bearing in mind that many of our ancestors did not have that honor, but they inherited their places of worship from previous generations.

Seeing the enthusiasm which you show in building and beautifying our church, and thus continuing the sacred legacy of our ancestors of showing love and gratitude to God, I offer thanks to our newly born Savior Jesus Christ for his many blessings which He bestowed on our parish community. I offer untiring gratitude to God for selecting you to become the *Ktitors*, the founders and builders of our church, whose names will be prayerfully remembered in all perpetuity.

May the newly born Savior continue to bless our parish and reward you abundantly for your love and support of His Church.

Your intercessor before God,



Протојереј и Високије Асмант

V. Rev. Protopresbyter Vasilije Vranic, PhD
Episcopal Dean of Washington, DC