

A PAGEANT ON THE SAINTS OF RUSSIA (988-1988)

SCENE ONE: Background scenery should include rolling hills of Judea, a cave that serves as a manger for animals, a night time sky with a bright star shining over the manger.

[Enter ISAIAH, dressed in a simple flowing robe and beard, with a scroll in his hand]

ISAIAH: Our story begins long before the year 988, even long before the birth of Jesus Christ. I am the prophet Isaiah sent by God to the people of Israel. We prophets of Israel were holy men who brought God's message to His people. We called the people to repent of their sinful ways and return to the One True God, otherwise God would punish them and their country. Indeed, the people did not heed our warnings and Israel was captured by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.. But I did not despair, for God gave a promise to me in a vision. [He reads from his scroll]

The people who have sat in darkness have seen a great light.

[ALL CHILDREN sing "God is with Us", with Isaiah reading the following verses from his scroll and the children singing "For God is with us" after each verse]

For unto us a Child is born, a Son is given.

(For God is with us)

And the government shall be upon His shoulder.

(For God is with us)

And of His peace there shall be no end.

(For God is with us)

And His name shall be called the Angel of the Great Counsel

(For God is with us)

Wonderful, Counsellor

(For God is with us)

Mighty God, Eternal Ruler, Prince of Peace

(For God is with us)

The Father of the world to come.

(For God is with us)

[Children repeat the entire song "God is with Us"]

Enter NARRATOR (standing to one side of the stage at a podium):

NARRATOR: And it came to pass in those days that a decree was sent out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed each unto his own city.

[Enter MARY AND JOSEPH, taking their places in front of the cave sketched on the background]

JOSEPH: And I, Joseph, also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which was called Bethlehem to be taxed with Mary, my betrothed, who was great with child. And so it was that while we were there, she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger for there was no room for us in the inn.

[Enter ANGELS and SHEPHERDS while NARRATOR continues]

NARRATOR: And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night and lo the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were so afraid. And the angel said unto them:

ANGEL [to the shepherds]: Fear not for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.

ALL ANGELS: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace good will among men.

[ ANGELS and SHEPHERDS move toward manger while NARRATOR continues]

NARRATOR: Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, there came wise men from the East.

[Enter WISE MEN, bearing gifts]

WISE MEN: And, lo the star which we had seen in the East went before us till it came to rest where the child was. And we brought him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

[All children sing the Tropar or Kontak of the Nativity, or "On This Bright Day"]

On this bright day, was born to us,  
Saviour King, God of All,  
Comforter of mankind,  
Christ the Son of God.

SCENE TWO: Background scenery should include village buildings with a church, simple countryside with trees and a

river. [While new scenery is moved into place, the NARRATOR continues]

NARRATOR: When Jesus was about 30 years old, He gathered around Him 12 apostles who accompanied Him as he preached and who witnessed the miracles He performed. Many people followed Jesus and believed in Him, but not everyone. And Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate, and was buried. But He rose again on the third day and appeared to His followers. And as He ascended into heaven He left them with this commandment: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always!

And the Holy Spirit was sent down upon Jesus followers who went forth spreading the message of Jesus Christ.

[Enter ST. CYRILL and ST. METHODIUS, wearing monastic robes, each carrying several scrolls and a staff...travelling scholars]

NARRATOR [turning to St. Cyrill and St. Methodius]: Who are you, where do you come from, and where are you going?

CYRILL: I am Cyrill, and this is my brother Methodius. We are Greeks and our home was once Thessalonica. There we had many friends from Slavic nations. And now we have been able to do something wonderful for those friends.

METHODIUS: We have been in Moravia since the year 863 travelling and preaching about Jesus Christ. But since the people we met did not have a written language, we devised this alphabet for them [unravels one of his scrolls].

CYRILL: We translated the Holy Scriptures and the Divine Liturgy into Slavonic for these people. Now the gospel of Jesus Christ can be preached to them in a language they understand, and they can worship in the true Orthodox way with their whole hearts and minds!

METHODIUS: But there is much more work to be done throughout the world if all nations are to know Jesus Christ. Our work is nearly finished. Now, it will be up to each and everyone of YOU [points to the audience] to follow the commandment Christ gave to His Apostles.

[Exit ST. CYRILL and ST. METHODIUS as NARRATOR continues]

NARRATOR: Indeed, the work of Saints Cyril and Methodius was carried forth into all the Slavic lands by their disciples. Eventually, the Slavic language was used in Church by the Bulgarians, Serbians, Czechs, Ukrainians and Russians. These two brothers are highly venerated by the Slavic Orthodox people because they brought the True faith to them in their own language. They are considered "equal to the Apostles" by the Church and are commemorated on May 11.

NARRATOR: The message of Jesus Christ was spread not only by monks and scholars, but by wealthy kings and rulers of great kingdoms, too. Jesus said to those who would be His followers: Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, but rather in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[Enter ST. OLGA, in a long dress and wearing a crown]

OLGA: Indeed, I learned that lesson the hard way. I am Olga, princess from the city of Kiev. My husband Igor and I were both pagans who worshipped many gods. After my husband was killed, I sought revenge upon his murderers. But my heart was softened when I visited Constantinople. It was there that I learned about the Christian life. I became one of the first few people in Russia to be baptized. Before my death in 969, I built a large church dedicated to St. Sophia and spent my money to help the poor.

My example was important for the future of the Russian people, and especially for my grandson Vladimir. I pray that YOU [pointing to the audience] will remember me and learn to heed the Gospel message as I have.

[Exit ST. OLGA, as ST. VLADIMIR enters attired in fine clothes, robe and crown]

VLADIMIR: I know now I should have listened to my grandmother's words from the start, but as a youth I was only interested in carousing and battling with enemy tribes. After ruling my people for several years, I became dissatisfied with our pagan gods. It was then I became like a merchant in search of fine pearls. I sent a delegation of my men to different parts of the world to find a suitable religion for my people. They travelled to the Volga River to visit the Muslims, then on to Jews living in the Khazar region, and then to the Christians living in Germany and in Constantinople. The majestic

beauty of the divine services in Constantinople's St. Sophia Cathedral deeply impressed them. On their return, they reported to me, "We did not know whether we were on earth or in heaven!"

I was so moved by their report that I was baptized a Christian. The following year, 988, the people of the city of Kiev came willingly to the Dnieper river to be baptized also. Thus Christianity became the religion of the Russian people. I set about Christianizing the entire country: building churches, opening schools to teach the children the new faith, and doing charitable works for the less fortunate.

Here in America, there are still many churches that need to be built, many children who need to be taught. And there are many less fortunate than YOU [pointing to the audience]. This is your country and it is up to you to spread the Orthodox faith in America.

(Exit ST. VLADIMIR as ALL CHILDREN sing Tropar to St. Vladimir)

O holy prince Vladimir,  
You were like a merchant in search of fine pearls.  
By sending servants to Constantinople for the Orthodox faith,  
You found Christ, the priceless pearl.  
He appointed you to be another Paul,  
Washing away in baptism your physical and spiritual blindness.  
We celebrate your memory,  
Asking you to pray for all Orthodox Christians of Russia,  
And for us your spiritual children.

NARRATOR: The church remembers St. Olga and her grandson St. Vladimir each year in July, for Jesus Christ changed their lives and those of their people forever. But Russia had other great leaders also, spiritual leaders: Saint Theodosius of the Caves in Kiev and Saint Sergius of Radonezh. Although they did not have the power and wealth of earthly kings and princes, they helped a mighty Russian nation emerge, built upon the spiritual treasure of monasticism.

[Enter ST. THEODOSIUS, wearing simple monastic garb, may be carrying prayer rope or a basket of bread]

THEODOSIUS: I don't want to talk about myself, but I want to share with you instead how we monks lived. There were so many of us, we needed a Rule to guide us: how we should sing, read, and behave in church; how we should act at meals; how we

should fast. But especially how we should be of service to the needy, whether they be princes or the hungry poor, just as Our Lord Jesus Christ showed us by His own example. When monks in my monastery went astray, I wept; when they returned and repented, I rejoiced.

Only a few of YOU [pointing to the audience], may have the opportunity to visit the place where I lived, the Pechershaya Lavra, which became one of the famous centers of religious life in Russia. But all of you can imitate my love, charity, and mildness.

Note: Pechershaya Lavra is "The Monastery of the Caves"

[Exit ST. THEODOSIUS as the NARRATOR continues]

NARRATOR: Two hundred fifty years after St. Theodosius died, a young boy was born in 1314 who was destined by God to become the "builder of Russia." For the Russia he knew was a devastated land, having been invaded by Mongol hordes in 1240. He was to mend the spirit of the Russian people which had been crushed by the barbarians. But how?

St. Sergius of Radonezh knew what Jesus had said, Come to Me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

[Enter ST. SERGIUS in a monastic robe]

SERGIUS: The Russia of my day was overrun with many enemies. But the enemy that was the greatest and that I sought to fight was Satan. That is why mine was a life of prayer. With the blessing of my parents, I went to live in the deep forests north of Moscow. There I built a small house and soon others monks came to join me. I taught the monks in my monastery that the only way to overcome troubles is to put Jesus Christ first. The Prince of Moscow came to me for spiritual guidance. I gave him my blessing when he went off to defeat the Mongols in battle. My followers built monasteries all over the Russian territory, and villages and towns sprang up around them. Russia was being rebuilt.

To those of YOU [pointing to audience] who would follow after me I say, You also have received a talent from God and must account for it before the Judgement seat of God.

[Exit ST. SERGIUS, as the NARRATOR continues]

NARRATOR: St. Sergius founded the most famous of all the monasteries in Russia. It is called Holy Trinity Monastery and is located about 50 miles north of

Moscow in Zagorsk. It is there you can visit the relics of this famous saint of Russia.

[Enter ST. JULIANA THE MERCIFUL, wearing simple, but fine clothes, head covered with a shawl or veil, carrying a basket of embroidered linen pieces or the like. She puts the basket down, removes a Bible from it, opens the Bible, reads out loud Matthew 25: 34-40 to the audience, and then continues...]

JULIANA: My name is Juliana, and I lived around the time of Ivan the Terrible, when there was much suffering and starvation. As a little girl I loved to help the poor. I would sew beautiful things like these [shows the audience what is in her basket] and sell them for money. The money I gave to the hungry and those without clothing. I wanted to be a nun. But instead, I married a rich land owner and had many children. I was able to continue helping the many needy and starving people who came to my door for help.

[She reaches back for her Bible, and reads out loud Matthew 25: 41-46 to the audience] These words of Jesus taught me how I should live. YOU [pointing to audience] too live in a time when there are many homeless and hungry people. What are you going to do about it?

[Exit ST. JULIANA, while ST. TIKHON enters, wearing monastic garb and carrying a lighted candle]

TIKHON: All my life I loved to go to church and pray. Then suddenly I became a bishop of the Church one day. I opened a monastery and wrote many articles to educate the priests of my time, for it was their task to graft sinners to the True Vine.

My name? St. Tikhon's Seminary in America bears my name, bringing the light of Christ [holds up his candle] for all of you in this land to see and spread. For remember our Lord's own teaching, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[Exit ST. TIKHON, as NARRATOR continues]

NARRATOR: At the time when George Washington was fighting the battles of the American Revolution and young Napoleon entered military school, a young man was entering the monastic life who would become as well-known in Russia as Washington is in America and Napoleon is in France -- the beloved St. Seraphim of Sarov.

