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Antiochian Orthodox Church  
York, Pennsylvania  
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# LIGHT OF THE WORLD

An Orthodox Nativity Pageant

# Notes

I so do enjoy a good story, be it from a book, my grandmother's memory, a musical production or a tale from the lips of my children. Somehow through story telling we come to understand truths in the world around us. Times past come alive again, even for just a moment, and in that moment, one glimpses the feeling, the excitement, thrill, fury, passion- the life- of that event, and it somehow connects us to persons and places through history. We hope that someday our own story, or at least a small piece of it, will be remembered by those we love and perhaps beyond. There's an old saying, "Make the world a better place than you found it". I pray that in a small way we have done this and that through the re-telling of these martyrs' stories you are able to connect with the truth of God's unfailing love and the capacity of man to love in return, especially during this Nativity season when we ponder the awesome miracle of God becoming incarnate, for our sakes.

Христос родился прославили его

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

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# Character List

Grandmother  
Grandfather  
Grandchild 1  
Grandchild 2  
Grandchild 3  
Lucia  
3 stargirls  
2 starboys  
Phelo  
Priscilla  
Soldiers  
Pagans (3- 4)  
St. Boniface  
Companions to St. Boniface (2)  
Ukrainian Carolers (group)  
Leader of the Carolers  
Caroler 1  
Caroler 2  
Child Caroler 1 & 2  
Narrator 1, 2 & 3

# Props

Grandma's chair	Grandpa's Chair	Lucia's headpiece
Clock set at 9:00pm	Christmas Tree	Red sashes
Toys/books/shelf/table	Electric light	Lanterns & hats for starboys
Candlesticks	Throw blanket	Candles (battery operated)
Giant Oak Tree	(Ukrainian) Caroling Costumes	Cave
Evergreen Tree	Sign: Carolers of Ukraine	Basket/ fish/ figs
Ax/ swords/ weapons	8 pointed stars	Black tablecloths for curtains
Rope	Treats/ treat bags (2)	Drum (optional)
Icon of the Theotokos/ Burning Bush	Handbells	Icon of St.Lucia

## **Scene 1**

*Grandparents living room: rocking chair, empty chair, throw blanket, rug on the floor, electric light (battery operated?) side table, candlestick, candle, matches, books*

*[Grandmother is rocking in the chair, kids are in pajamas playing with some toys]*

**Child 1:** “Hey Grandma, I have a joke for you. ‘A family was eating dinner together. One of the children asked, ‘Dad, where’s our pig?’ The father replied, ‘Be quiet and eat your ham.’”

*[Church bells in the distance mark the time for 9:00pm]*

**Grandmother:** *[chuckles at the joke, then acts surprised at the time]* “My, my, look at the time! I do love the sound of those bells, especially at Christmastime. But I can’t believe that it’s been dark for so long tonight already. Children, it’s time for bed. How about a story before you go to sleep?”

**Children, clamoring, altogether:** “Stories!” “Yay!” “Storytime!”

**Child 2:** “We love stories! How ‘bout trucks?”

**Child 3:** “I want a fairy tale!”

*[Lights flicker. Everyone looks around. Lights go out.]*

**Child 3:** “It’s so dark in here!”

**Child 1:** “Ooo... Let’s do a ghost story!”

**Child 2:** “I’m afraid of the dark!”

**Grandmother:** “Let’s not scare the little ones. We can make a little light. Let’s light a candle.”

*[lights a candle]*

**Child 1:** “In Sunday Church School we learned that Jesus is the light of the world.”

**Grandmother:** “That’s wonderful! The Bible verse you’re thinking of is from the gospel of Matthew. Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’ Hmm... You know, I DO know a story about a girl who became a symbol of light. She is remembered around the world on the darkest night of the year. Any guesses what her name is? I’ll give you a hint: her name means light.”

**Children together:** “We don’t know! Who is it?”

**Grandmother:** “Her name is St. Lucia. There are many stories and legends about her. She lived in the days of persecution in the early church in Italy. As a Christian, Lucia knew that loving your neighbor as yourself was a very important part of following Christ. She was always helping the poor however she could, especially visiting the sick and giving food to the needy. There are songs about her too. Do you want to hear the song?”

**Children Together:** “yeah!”

## **Scene 2**

*[Cue Song for St. Lucia. Lucia and entourage parades in from the back, singing the song, and lines up in the front. Priscilla and Phelo enter from stage left and go to cave.]*

### **Song: St. Lucia**

Hark! Through the darksome night, Sounds come a winging  
Lo! 'tis the girl of light, Joyfully singing  
    {Clad in her garment white  
    Wearing her crown of light  
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!} [Repeat lines in brackets]

*[Entourage sits on step. Lucia gathers up a basket of food and heads for the caves to visit the sick. Face the audience while speaking.]*

**Lucia:** “I’m so glad I was able to get some fresh fish and figs at the market today. I am sure it will brighten up Phelo and Priscilla’s day. They have been so sick lately. May God heal them as he healed my own sick mother. *[excitedly]* What a miracle that was! I shall always be pure for the sake of Christ. He alone have I given my life to.”

*[By this time, Lucia has arrived at the cave and goes in to the sick.]*

**Phelo:** “Lucia!” \*starts coughing\*

**Priscilla:** “Oh, Lucia, you have come again! You risk your life in coming here. You know that they are looking for you since you have rejected your suitor. You are so very kind. You are more beautiful on the inside than even the beauty of your face! May God protect you.”

**Lucia:** “Thank you, Priscilla. I love Jesus more than anyone and all I want is to be with him! I cannot bear the thought of marrying. I brought you a fresh fish and here are some figs. I hope you soon feel better.”

**Phelo:** “Mmm! Figs are my favorite!”

**Priscilla:** “Thank you, Lucia. You had better not stay long. We don’t want you to get sick. Go with God.”

**Lucia:** “I will pray for you. Good bye.”

**Phelo:** “Bye! Come again soon!” \*coughs\*

*[Lucia leaves the cave, soldiers capture her on the road and escort her away. Priscilla and Phelo exit, sit on stairs]*

**Narrator 1:** “Lucia now suffers for the sake of Christ and is martyred. *Why* are people willing to suffer and die for the faith? Because Jesus is REAL. Jesus is ALIVE. Jesus is WITH US. Always. And why don’t we hide our faith? Because we are the light of the world, just as Christ is the light. Jesus tells his disciples,

Matthew 5:14-16 English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>14</sup>‘You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.’<sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.’”

**Narrator 2:** “From the Akathist to our Sweetest Lord Jesus we read, [Kontakion 8]

Seeing God wondrously incarnate, let us shun the vain world and set our mind on things divine; for God came down to earth that He might raise us to heaven. We cry to Him: Alleluia!

[Ekos 8]

...when He willingly suffered for our sake, and by His death our death didst put to death, and by His Resurrection didst grant life to those that sing:

*[students say ‘Jesus’, 13x, Narrator says each line]*

Jesus, Sweetness of the heart!  
Jesus, Strength of the body!  
Jesus, Radiance of the soul!  
Jesus, Swiftness of the mind!  
Jesus, Joy of the conscience!  
Jesus, Well-known Hope!  
Jesus, Memory before the ages!  
Jesus, High Praise!  
Jesus, my Supremely-exalted Glory!  
Jesus, my Desire, reject me not!  
Jesus, my Shepherd, seek me!  
Jesus, my Savior, save me!  
Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!”<sup>[1]</sup>

*BACKSTAGE: Prep for scene change- St. Boniface- take down the cave*

### **Scene 3**

*Footsteps are heard, Grandfather enters lugging tree behind him.*

**Grandfather:** “Hey everybody! Looky what I’ve brought home!”

*Children scrambling to see, excited.*

**Children together:** “Yay! It’s a Christmas tree! Hurray!”

**Grandmother:** “It certainly is lovely. Thank you for bringing it home.”

*[Grandfather goes about setting up the Christmas tree.]*

**Grandmother:** “Tomorrow we will decorate the tree for Christmas, children. What do you think about that?”

**Children together:** “Yay! I love decorating the tree! Yeah! Me too!”

**Child 3:** “Grandma, why does everybody get a Christmas tree?”

**Grandmother:** “Well, some people do it because they think it’s pretty. Some people do it because they have wonderful memories of the tree from when they grew up.”

**Grandfather:** “The Christmas tree we know today came from the Germans. It’s an old story, and an adventurous one at that. Would you like to hear what happened?”

**Children, together:** “Oh yes! We love stories! More stories! Please!”

**Grandfather, laughing at their excitement:** “Well, let me get out the storybook about it. *[selects book from shelf]* Here it is: The Legend of St. Boniface and the Christmas Tree adapted from The First Christmas Tree by Henry VanDyke and combined with other legends.”

*[Grandfather takes a seat and reads loudly. While the story is being told, actors act it out.]*

**Grandfather:** “In the eighth century, St. Boniface was a monk who lived in England. Barbarians throughout Europe had not yet been reached with the gospel of Christ, and so St. Boniface was sent as a missionary to the German lands. Companions for the work ahead were assigned. Trekking through the Alps, and bearing the trials of such a long journey on foot, they eventually arrived in the pagan lands tired, but ready to share the gospel. They’d had a long time to prepare by prayer and fasting on this journey, and they knew they would have to face their fears, trust in God to provide and then share the love of God with the barbarians. They knew they would have to dispel the pagans’ superstitions and prove they, the Christians, served the one true God. ‘But *how?*’ they wondered.

*[Enter stage left: Pagans cajoling each other, preparing to make sacrifices.]*

*[Enter stage right: St. Boniface and companions, acting cold and walking slowly.]*

**Grandfather:** One Christmas Eve, a few years after arriving and working amongst the pagans, St. Boniface and his companions were walking through the woods. They were missing home and their community and the joyous solemnity of the services and the celebrations they would miss on morrow’s feastday. The light of the moon shone through the barren branches and the men wearily trudged on. They wanted to rest, but they were on a mission. St. Boniface told them,”

**St. Boniface:** ‘It is Yuletide and the pagans will be at Thunder Oak, commencing their sacrifices to Thor. It is time they see the power of God and turn from their demonic allegiances.’

**Grandfather:** “Honestly, the men were scared of the Germans. The pagans were fierce warriors afterall, and the monks were not exactly the fighting kind. Knowing this, and, reaching the place of sacrifices, Boniface told his friends,”

**St. Boniface:** ‘Here is Thunder Oak, and here the cross of Christ shall break the hammer of the false god, Thor!’<sup>[2]</sup>

*[Everyone freezes their pose while Grandfather continues talking, except for Boniface, who follows the directions as he reads.]*

**Grandfather:** “He was determined to not only save the life of the human sacrifice, but also to prove that he would not be struck down by lightning at the hands of Thor, as the pagans believed would happen. He stepped forward into the crowd and, in a show of great trust in God and born from a desire to kindle the fire of Christ in the German pagans, Boniface grabbed an axe and, CHOP! Down went the oak tree with one fell swoop. With a crash, it landed. Thunder Oak of mighty Thor had fallen!

*[Oak tree falls down, revealing evergreen tree behind it. All flurry around, confused and shocked, then listen Boniface speak.]*

**Grandfather:** “The Germans were astounded. The holy bishop preached the Gospel to the people and used a little fir tree that was behind the now felled oak tree as a tool of evangelization. Pointing to it he said,”<sup>[3]</sup>

**St. Boniface:** “This little tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace... It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ-child; gather about it, not in the wild wood, but in your own homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness.”<sup>[4]</sup>

**Grandfather:** “Years later, St. Boniface did die as a martyr for the faith, and the people in the lands of Germany remember this great and daring saint and the lesson he taught of how the one true God, the creator of the world, can be seen and understood through all of His creation- even in something as simple as an evergreen tree. Romans 1:20 [NIV] tells us, ‘For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.’”

*[Grandfather closes up the book and puts it away. St. Boniface and Pagans sit on the stairs.]*

**Child 1:** “Wow! I can’t believe it! How did he manage to cut a giant oak tree in one swing? Oak trees are *really* big!”

**Grandmother:** “Well, there is *always* truth and *always* some exaggeration in a legend, so we won’t really know if it took more than one swing or not until we get to heaven and talk with St. Boniface himself. But St. Boniface *really* did prove the power of the one, true God that day, and many pagans believed in Jesus the Christ when he told them all about Jesus. It was hard work, but God provides! And now we can remember God’s power and love every time we look at a Christmas tree.”

*[Carolers begin making noise with their handbells, drums, humming, coughing, etc. Prepare to start singing and parading.]*

## **Scene 4**

**Children, together:** “What is that noise? Who’s outside? What’s going on, Grandma? Do you hear that?”

**Grandfather:** “I’m not sure, but you know, some people like to go caroling door to door this time of year.”

*[Grandma looks out window]*

**Grandmother:** “It looks like they’re coming from the Ukrainian church down the street.”

*[People hold the stars on poles twirling or moving them, general movement in the group. Little kids look up at the icons on the stars.]*

**Leader of Carolers:** “Now, now everyone, it’s time to warm-up! Repeat after me! La-la-la-la-la. La-la-la-la-la. Good!”

**Child Caroler 1:** *[looking up at the stars on the poles]* “Those stars are so pretty! And so are those icons.”

**Child Caroler 2:** “Why do we carry these stars on poles with us?”

**Caroler 1:** “If you notice, the stars are special. They are 8 pointed stars. Eight is an important number to the Orthodox. It signifies *more than* completion and fullness. Eight represents the Kingdom of God and the life of the world to come, mankind being able to once again be in Paradise with God. Sunday is the coming together of the last and the first day of the week. It is the 8<sup>th</sup> day because it is the day of Resurrection, God’s judgment and victory predicted by the prophets. [5] The 8 pointed star reminds us of all of this and gives us hope to be with God in eternity.”

**Child Caroler 2:** “What about that icon? I’ve never seen that icon before. What does it mean?”

**Caroler 2:** “The icon is of the Theotokos and the Burning Bush. Do you remember the story of Moses and the burning bush? He was amazed that the bush was on fire, but yet it was not actually burning up. The fire was the presence of God. God is holy and has always determined the way in which mankind should approach Him and worship Him. Man was not allowed to see nor touch the living God after Adam and Eve were sent away from the Garden of Eden.

The miracle of the Burning Bush was a type or a foreshadowing of the Theotokos, the mother of God, who was able to have God himself not only *touching* her, but *inside* of her, and then once Jesus was born, she nursed him. Those close, intimate caresses between mother and child that are so dear to us, but sometimes taken for granted as normal and every day, was actually a very SHOCKING thing to ponder. That someone was able to LOOK UPON the face of God in the man child Jesus, to TOUCH God himself- well! Everyone knew that *no one* was able to see God and live! It was the Uncreated coming together with the created without being destroyed. A miracle!

Even Moses, a most holy, privileged prophet and leader of Israel was only allowed to see the back of God when he was on the mountain. No one else, nor their belongings, nor even their flocks, could even touch the *base* of the holy mountain without being destroyed. *No one* could imagine that we could be so close to God that he could *be inside of us!*”

*[All students say ‘Rejoice!’ 8x throughout the following reading.]*

**Narrator 3:** “Revealing to thee the pre-eternal counsel  
Gabriel came and stood before thee, O Maiden, and in greeting said:

“Rejoice, Earth that has not been sown!  
Rejoice, Burning bush that remains unconsumed!  
Rejoice, Unsearchable depth!  
Rejoice, Bridge that leads to Heaven!  
Rejoice, Ladder raised high that Jacob saw!  
Rejoice, Divine jar of manna!  
Rejoice, Deliverance from the curse!  
Rejoice, Restoration of Adam; the LORD is with thee.”<sup>[7]</sup>

Jesus said in Mark 16:15, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.’ It’s important that we share the light of Christ with others!”

*[Carolers walk around to new spot while singing. Optional: Two of the child carolers holding bags beg for treats from the family at their home. Optional: end song after verse 7]*

### **Song: Good Evening to You**

1. Master of the house  
We wish you a good evening

#### Chorus

Rejoice and sing!  
All the earth rejoice!  
The Son of God now is born.

2. Set upon the table/ all your finest linen
3. Bring us out some bread now/ warm and brown and crusty
4. Celebrate the season/ three great feasts together
5. First the feast of Christmas/ birth of our King Jesus
6. Next the feast of Basil/ Saint from Cappadocia
7. Then the feast in January/ of our Lord’s Epiphany
8. First the feast of Christmas/ brings us consolation
9. Next the feast of Basil/ brings sweet jubilation
10. Finally, Epiphany/ reminds us of our destiny

*[Everyone that has been seated now stands up to sing the following song.]*

**Song: The Star of Bethlehem is Shining**

The Star of Bethlehem is shining  
It is the star of hope and joy  
\*Three kings from lands afar are coming  
to praise the newborn baby boy (\*repeat)

Gold, frankincense and myrrh are given  
As presents for the baby king  
\*Not over country or a nation  
but over soul and everything (\*repeat)

Accept O Lord our thanks and gladness  
You gave your son to us on earth  
\*You gave your son for our redemption  
Upon this day of holy birth (\*repeat)

Rejoice you nations! God is with us!  
And praise on high His holy name  
\*Because this day is when our Savior  
Was born on earth, to us he came. (\*repeat)

**Grandfather:** “As we gather around our Christmas trees this year, may we give thanks for the gift of our faith, hold the story of our Savior’s birth in our hearts and listen for the song of the angels.”<sup>[6]</sup>

**Everyone together:** “God *is* everywhere and fills all things! The heavens *do* declare the glory of God! And we declare to you:

**Everyone Together:** [*In Italian*] Cristo e nato glorificare lui [*In German*] Christus is geboren! Zu verherrlichen ihn! [*In Greek*] Christos Gennate! Doxasate! [*In Arabic*] Al-Masih woolihda! Fih-majidooh! [*In Russian*] Христос родился прославили его Christos Razdajetsja! - Slavite Jeho! [*In Ukrainian*] Khrystos Razhdajetsia! - Slavite Yoho! [*Repeat in English*] Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

**Cue Song: Carol of the Bells**

Hark how the bells, sweet silver bells  
All seem to say, throw cares away

Christmas is here, bringing good cheer  
To young and old, meek and bold  
Ding dong ding dong  
That is their song  
With joyful ring, all caroling

One seems to hear words of good cheer, from everywhere, filling the air!  
Oh how they pound raising the sound o'er hill and dale, telling their tale  
Gaily they ring while people sing, songs of good cheer, Christmas is here!

Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas  
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas  
On, on they send, on without end  
Their joyful tone to every home

Hark how the bells, sweet silver bells  
All seem to say, throw cares away  
Christmas is here bringing good cheer  
To young and old, meek and the bold  
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Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas  
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas  
On, on they send, on without an end  
Their joyful tone to every home  
Ding dong ding dong!

## Cited Works & Page of Resources

- [1] *Akathist to our Sweetest Lord Jesus* from the Prayer Book, Holy Trinity Monastery (2011)
- [2] Fr. William P. Saunders “The Christmas Tree”, *Straight Answers* article in the *Arlington Catholic Herald*, available at <http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/columns/williamsaunders/straightanswers/68.asp>
- [3] [http://catholicexchange.com/st-boniface-and-the-christmas-tree#\\_ftn4](http://catholicexchange.com/st-boniface-and-the-christmas-tree#_ftn4)
- [4] *Van Dyke, Henry, The First Christmas Tree, SCRIBNER TREASURY–22 CLASSIC TALES 183-202 (1953)*
- [5] [orthodoxwiki.org/Lord%27s\\_Day](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Lord%27s_Day)
- [6] Fr. William P. Saunders “The Christmas Tree”, *Straight Answers* article in the *Arlington Catholic Herald*, available at <http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/columns/williamsaunders/straightanswers/68.asp>
- [7] Akathist to the Most Holy Theotokos
- ESV Bible
- NIV Bible
- [https://orthodoxwiki.org/Lucy\\_of\\_Syracuse](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Lucy_of_Syracuse)
- <https://iconreader.wordpress.com/2010/12/20/discovering-the-unburnt-bush-icon/>
- <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2010/09/04/102500-icon-of-the-mother-of-god-the-unburnt-bush>
- <https://archive.org/details/VanDyke1stXmasTree> audiobook
- <https://archive.org/details/firstchristmast00dykegoog> digital original
- Good Evening sheet music & English lyrics from [canasg.com](http://canasg.com)

## YouTube Links

- St. Lucia <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GrLY9mq9g&list=PL04hnYRvw-fZ6c-r6OnVD2FzqBwNgmsbW&index=5>
- Good Evening (in Ukrainian) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaACqhOBDM4&list=PL04hnYRvw-fZ6c-r6OnVD2FzqBwNgmsbW&index=3>
- The Star of Bethlehem is Shining <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfwqTHLazbw&list=PL04hnYRvw-fZ6c-r6OnVD2FzqBwNgmsbW&index=3>
- Carol of the Bells <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfPCxCua0xY&index=8&list=PL04hnYRvw-fZ6c-r6OnVD2FzqBwNgmsbW>