



The **HOLY PROPHET HABAKKUK**, the eighth of the Twelve Minor Prophets, was descended from the Tribe of Simeon, and he prophesied around 650 B.C. Habakkuk foresaw the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the Babylonian Captivity and the later return of the captives to their native land. During the war with the Babylonians the prophet withdrew to Arabia, where the following miracle occurred. When he was bringing dinner to the reapers, he met an angel of the Lord, and instantly by the strength of his spirit he was transported to Babylon, where at the time the Prophet Daniel was languishing in prison. The food intended for the reapers assuaged the hunger of the exhausted Prophet Daniel (Dan. 14:33-37). After the end of the war with the Babylonians, the Prophet Habakkuk returned to his homeland and died at a great old age. His relics were found at the time of Emperor Theodosius the Younger (408-450), together with the relics of the Prophet Micah (August 14). The Fourth Ode of the Psalter ("O Lord, I have heard Your report, and was afraid...") is based on Habakkuk 3:2-19.

The major theme of his short book, only three chapters, is the **PROBLEM OF EVIL**. Habakkuk agonizes in his soul that wickedness, strife, and oppression are rampant in Judah, but God seemingly does nothing about it. The people were living in wealth and luxury, and society was showing signs of rot and collapse. The rich were unjust

and greedy, disregarding the needs of the poor, the widows, and the orphans. The judges were entirely corrupt. Habakkuk's perplexity intensifies when he learns that God will judge Judah by the hands of the Babylonians, who are more wicked and ruthless than those being judged! And who will destroy Jerusalem in 587 BC taking the Jewish people into their second exile away from the land that God had given them – the Babylonian Exile.

In the end, Habakkuk learns to rest and trust in God's dealings with His creation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is prophesied in this book as «the Lord in His holy temple...» (2:20) and the «One Who comes from afar to visit His People with salvation». (3:3 – quoted in the hymns of the Royal Hours of the Nativity.)

~ Miracle of St. Nicholas, Jacobs Creek ~

December 19, 2007, the Feast of St. Nicholas of Myra according to the Julian Calendar, marked the 100th anniversary of the Darr Mine Disaster and the Miracle of St. Nicholas in Jacobs Creek, Pennsylvania. This was Pennsylvania's worst mining disaster and one of the worst in the United States. When the Darr Mine exploded, 239 men and boys lost their lives. Only two escaped. That day Carpatho-Rusyn miners gave up a day's wage to attend a morning Divine Liturgy, as December 19 is the feast day of St. Nicholas, their patron saint. During the service they heard a terrible rumbling and the ground shook as gas and dust exploded in the mine. Recognizing disaster, everyone rushed to help rescue any survivors. However, only two men working near the mine entrance were still alive. The poisonous gas, called afterdamp, killed many who survived the explosion itself. Most of the victims were Hungarian and Italian immigrants; seventy-one Hungarians are buried in a mass grave in Olive Cemetery. Many newspapers, including the New York Times, reported the miraculous events. One Pittsburgh paper stated: *Religious fervor is due to sweep through the Youghiogheny Valley as never before as a consequence of the Darr disaster. Today was a holiday of the Greek Catholic Church, and as such it was observed by many of the men who usually work in the Darr mines. Usually about 400 men toil within the mine. On account of the religious holiday—it was the Feast of St. Nicholas—this number was nearly cut in half, and these, almost two hundred men, who were saved by religious devotion, will certainly be more devout than ever, after the extent of the mine's horror is fully realized.*

The men observing the feast day were spared. It is estimated that St. Nicholas prevented the loss of two to three hundred men and boys, some as young as ten. Had they been in the mine, another thousand women and children would have been widowed or orphaned. They would have faced financial ruin as there was little or no assistance from neither the coal companies nor government agencies (victims' families in Monongah received funeral expenses and \$150). This was the second miracle of St. Nicholas and miners in 1907. Earlier on December 6, Nicholas' feast day in the Gregorian calendar, the worst mining disaster in United States history took place in Monongah, West Virginia. Nearly 400 men lost their lives that day. However, 60–100 Italian Roman Catholic and Carpatho-Rusyn Greek Catholic miners were spared as they attended a Roman Catholic St. Nicholas feast day observance. American mines were more dangerous than European mines. Practices outlawed in Europe were still allowed in the US where minors were three to four times more likely to die on the job. After the Darr Mine reopened in 1910, Carpatho-Rusyns on both sides of the Youghiogheny River built churches dedicated to Saint Nicholas in gratitude for his miraculous protection (the area had previously been served by the priest from St. Stephen's in Leisenring). St. Nicholas Orthodox Church was established in Jacobs Creek and, on the other side of the river, St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Perryopolis. The Darr mine had entrances on both sides of the river. <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/centennial/>