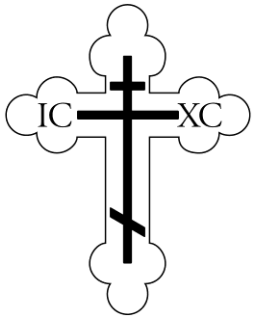
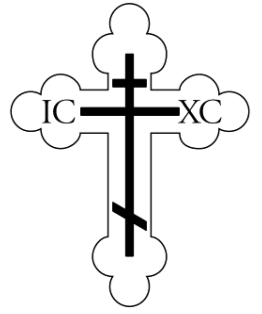


Protection of the Virgin Mary



Orthodox Church



A Parish of the
Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Merrillville, IN 46410
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Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle
(219)384-6826 • frjacobvansickle@gmail.com

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confessions are heard before or
after Vespers or by appointment.

**Welcome visitors!
Please join us in the
parish hall after
Divine Liturgy for
coffee hour.**

December 22, 2019

Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ Sunday of the Holy Fathers

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 2 – Resurrectional Troparion

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal,
You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead.
And when from the depths You raised the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!”

Tone 2 – Troparion of the Holy Fathers

Great are the accomplishments of faith,
for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as
though in the waters of rest;
and the Prophet Daniel appeared
a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.//
So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

Tone 4 – Troparion of the Forefeast

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all!
Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms
forth from the Virgin in the cave!
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit;
if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam.//
Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

Tone 1 – Kontakion of the Holy Fathers

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha!
The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd
she carries in her womb.
The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him,
and with the shepherds they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

Tone 3 – Kontakion of the Forefeast

Today the Virgin comes to the cave
to give birth to the Eternal Word.
Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!
Glorify with the Angels and the shepherds
the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little child!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 4 – Prokeimenon of the Holy Fathers (Daniel 3)

Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers,
and praised and glorified is Your name forever!

Epistle: Hebrews 11.9-10, 17-23, 32-40 (Forefeast)

Brethren: It was by faith that Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise; for he awaited the city which has foundations, whose builder and

maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; the receiver of the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," determining that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not receiving deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others were tried by mocking and scourging, yes, and by chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned; they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, because God had provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Gospel: Matthew 1.1-25 (Forefeast)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron

begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, desired to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

So all this was done that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'"

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

N.Dep. Mary Dula
Mat. Nadia Metulynsky
Diane Rosco
Julia Karp
Archiman. Ephraim
Margaret Vogrin
Martin Svihra
Pr. George Pappas

Myroslav Diakowsky
Ev.Mem Anastasia Pysh ('22)
George Silchitz ('24)
Anna Reed ('55)
Luba Sarafin (2006)
Mary Drozda (2014)
Anatol Meuch

Health & Salvation:	Stacey	Larry
Archpr. Peter	Jeramie	Rollie
Pr. John	Olivia	Joseph
Pr. Christopher	Parker	Martin
Mat. Jennifer	Melissa	Mark
Andrew	Jonathan	Alexa
Gideon	Matthew	Paula
Kevin	Gail	James
Jon	Maria	Joanne
Tanya	Barbara	Michael
Jovan	Thomas	Joseph
Julia	Carol	Rachel
Warren	Jessica	Kathleen
Carol	Eduardo	Paul
Tom	Christine	William
Elizabeth	Nicholas	Michael
Tina	Natalie	Frederick
Brittany	Barbara	Janet
Jennifer	Kristin	Lea
Lennox	Linda	Hania
Laila	Phyllis	Ephraim
Paula	Kay	
	Fred	

*If you know someone who needs prayer, please give their name to Fr Jacob

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you to those who delivered angel tree gift(s), helping two local families with children have a merry Christmas.

Stewardship envelopes for 2020 are now available. If you have been a regular steward of this Church, there is a box with your name on it for pick-up. If you want to become a steward but do not have a numbered box, please tell Mike Gruszyk, our treasurer, and he will get you one. It is much easier for us to account for your giving if you use assigned envelopes.

2020 Calendars from St. Tikhon's are available in the Narthex. Please take only one per adult until they have been out for a few weeks and everyone has had a chance at them.

There is no **Bible Study** this week. We resume on January 8.

On Sunday, Dec 29, after Divine Liturgy we will have our annual **Christmas Yolka and potluck**. Please let us know on the sign-up sheet in the narthex what you can bring to share.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 24: Vesperal Liturgy of the Nativity of Christ @ 10am
Vigil of the Nativity of Christ @ 6pm

Dec 25: Divine Liturgy of the Nativity of Christ @ 9am

Dec 29: Christmas Yolka and pot-luck luncheon after Liturgy

Dec 31: Great Vespers for the Circumcision of Christ @
Descent of the Holy Ghost @ 6pm

Jan 1: Divine Liturgy for the Circumcision of Christ @ 10am

Jan 5: Vespers of Theophany with the Great Blessing of Water after coffee hour

Jan 6: Divine Liturgy for the Theophany of our Lord @ 10am

Feb 9: Annual Parish Meeting after Divine Liturgy

Last week's offerings to the Lord: \$2,509

The 2019 Nativity Message of His Grace, our Bishop Paul

For today I see equality of honor between heaven and earth, and a way for all those below to things above, matching the condescension of those on high. However great the heaven of heavens may be, or the upper waters which form a roof over the celestial regions, or any heavenly place, state, or order, they are by no more marvelous or honorable than the cave, the manger, the water sprinkled on the Infant and His swaddling clothes. For nothing done by God from the beginning of time was more beneficial to all or more divine than Christ's nativity, which we celebrate today.... The very Word of God from God emptied Himself in an indescribable way, came down from on high to the lowest state of man's nature, and indissolubly linked it with Himself, and in humbling Himself and becoming poor like us, He raised on high the things below, or rather, He gathered both things into one, mingling humanity with divinity, and by so doing He taught everyone that humility is the road that leads upwards, setting forth Himself as an example before men and holy angels alike.

(St. Gregory Palamas on the Nativity)

The Word of God, timelessly begotten of the Father, takes on our fallen human nature and raises it on high. But He didn't accomplish this through some great demonstration of His omnipotent power. He is born into this world owning nothing and having no home. He is born in a manger, in a cave. His humble beginning in time reveals the Incarnate Timeless One.

This is what happens at every Divine Liturgy. We are invited to a banquet to partake of the Incarnate One. We humbly partake of bread and wine now become His Body and Blood. This banquet is the theme of the Gospel of Luke read the 2nd Sunday before the Nativity. When people start making

excuses for not attending, this is reported to the householder issuing the invitation:

Then the householder in anger said to his servant, "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame." (Luke 14:21)

St. Ambrose, in commenting on this verse, says, "He invites both good and evil to enter in order to strengthen the good and change the disposition of the wicked for the better. The saying that was read today is fulfilled, 'then wolves and lambs will feed together.'"

There are many interpretations of this gospel reading. Perhaps one way to look at it is to answer the invitation for both "good and evil" to come and embrace Him Who is born in the Cavern for our salvation. Once we behold the God-Man and see something of ourselves fulfilled in Him, then the invitation to the Eucharistic banquet becomes the fulfillment of that experience.

So, let us all come to the Cave to greet the One Who will "strengthen the good and change the disposition of the wicked for the better." Let us come to see the Church as the place where the polarities of life are reconciled and united in the New Adam, Jesus Christ, born into this world for us men and for our salvation.

Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!

With love in Christ, the unworthy

+PAUL

Bishop of Chicago and the Midwest