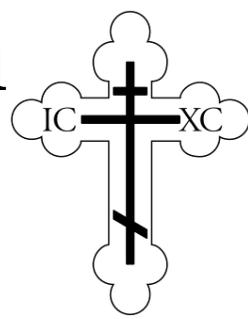
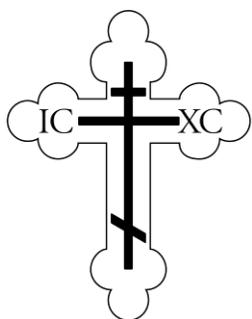


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



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



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

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or
after Vespers or by
appointment.

December 20, 2020

Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ

The Forefeast of the Nativity of the Lord begins on December 20. From now on, most of the liturgical hymns will be concerned with the birth of the Savior. Many of the Church's hymns of this period are slightly modified versions of the hymns of Holy Week.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus. Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city's inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

"I behold a strange and most glorious mystery," the Church sings with awe, "Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid." (9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

The Feast commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, "Brethren, observe the feast days; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month." In another place it also says, "Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world."

In the second century, St Clement of Alexandria indicates that the celebration of the Nativity of Christ in Egypt was already December 25. In the third century, St Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of the Gospel of Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church.

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 3 – Resurrectional Troparion

Let the heavens rejoice!

Let the earth be glad!

For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.

He has trampled down death by death.

He has become the first born of the dead.

He has delivered us from the depths of hell,

and has granted to the world//

great mercy.

Tone 4 – Troparion for 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 2 – Troparion on the Sunday before Nativity

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 1 – Kontakion on the Sunday before Nativity

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 – Song of the 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 (Sunday before Nativity)

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 (Sunday before Nativity)

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. Ernst Pedersen

Barbara Kurth

Mary Ann Behnke

Mitch Bright

Archbishop David

Sue McCune

Health & Salv.

Archpr. Peter

Mat. Margaret

Mat. Anne

Pr. Christopher

Mat. Jennifer

Andrew

Gideon

Kevin

Jon

Tanya

Jovan

Julia

Warren

Tom

Tina

Brittany

Jennifer

Gail

Stacy

Jeramie

Olivia

Parker

Christine

Linda

Larry

Rollie

Joseph

Nadia

Daniel

Brendan

David

Sharon

Jason Moon

Ev.Mem. Joseph Stetsik ('22)

Daria Makarevich ('29)

Peter Avdosenko ('59)

Andrew Kowal ('66)

Tony Klaja ('96)

Michael

Janie

Tanya

Christopher

Nina

Renee

Carissa

Cynthia

John

Vern

Olga

Mark

Jerry

Michael

Janice

Anthony

Janet

Daryl

Diane

Carla

Susan

Timothy

William

Paul

Joseph

Linda

Claudia

Tom

Beth

Elizabeth

Snezana

Nathan

Kara

Ryan

Thomas

Carol

Christine

Jon

Zoey

Dominic

Declan

Hudson

TaQuana

Ayden

Hyland

Jason

Ted

James

Pamela

Erin

Alexander

Ronald

Theodore

Robert

Mary Ann

Lara

Craig

Chuck

Scott

Mark

Julie

Christine

Dale

Ashley

Abbey

Hillary

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Sausage sale pick-up is in the hall today. We could also use a few hands to help tear down tables afterward.

2021 Calendars are available in the Narthex.

Please have any **end-of-year** donations in by next Sunday, for the sake of our treasurer.

Next Sunday, our Church school children will perform a short **Yolka** in the Nave after Divine Liturgy.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 24: **Vespereal Liturgy of Christmas @ 10am**
Christmas Vigil @ 6pm

Dec 25: **Festal Divine Liturgy @ 9am**

Dec 31: **Great Vespers** for the Feast of **Christ's Circumcision**

Jan 1: **Divine Liturgy** for the Feast of **Christ's Circumcision @ 10am**

Last Week's Gifts to the Lord: \$1,253

The 2020 Nativity Message

of His Beatitude, our Metropolitan Tikhon

To the Venerable Hierarchs, Esteemed Clergy, Reverend Monastics, and Beloved Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My Beloved Brethren and Blessed Children in the Lord, on this the glorious and light-filled Feast of the Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, I greet you with the words that resound throughout our Churches and homes during this season: **Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

By the grace of God, we have come through an extraordinary year fraught with challenges and trials that none of us could have expected. We have found ourselves confused, scared, and anxious. As we realized the frailty of our earthly life and the many fleeting things of this world to which we so often cling, more than anything, we have found ourselves in need of a Savior.

It is especially in these challenging moments that we are strengthened by God's promise, spoken in the book of Deuteronomy: "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them: for it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you" (Deut 31:6). As children of God, as children of the promise, we should remain steadfast in hope. We should never let our hope waiver, because, as the present feast reminds us, we are strengthened continually by the presence of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus, who saves us from our sins and weaknesses, and reconciles us with our heavenly Father. The scripture, hymns, and rites of the feast testify that Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, is He who has also died on the Cross, and become the first-born of the dead, raised us all by the Power of God, and opened the gates of the kingdom to us.

The great Prophet Isaiah, speaking of this kingdom, tells us:

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever (Is 9:7).

Beloved hierarchs, clergy, monastics, and faithful, let your hope be renewed at the Nativity of Christ! Be assured that God is with us! Perceiving the mystery of this feast, difficulties and trials in this life will become bearable, as your faith is strengthened, and your hope remains firm. With all the blessings of the feast, I remain

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Glory to God for all things!