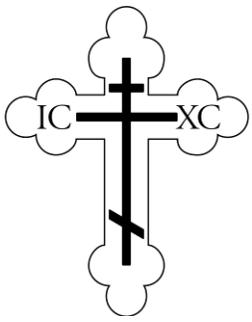
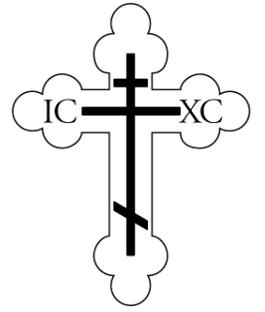


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



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



8600 Grand Blvd.
Merrillville, IN 46410
(219)947-4748
Hall: (219)730-4698
www.ptvm.com

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

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

December 12, 2021

Sunday of the

Holy Forefathers of Christ

Two Sundays before the Manifestation of God in the flesh which is known as Nativity, the Orthodox Church connects us to the crowd of Forefathers and Prophets from the time of Adam to Christ. They are all related to Christ, either because they awaited him, or because they were from his lineage, or also because they were seeking Him without knowing him.

The Church wants to teach us that this unique event did not come as a surprise strange to humankind, but that it was the desire of the nations. They had been waiting for centuries, and the world had been filled with prophecies. Many righteous longed to see it and reposed with that hope.

The church focuses on the universal and widespread character of Nativity. Christ is not the God of a particular people, but rather he is the Creator of the entire universe and, consequently, he is the God of the whole world.

After the fall of humankind and God's promise of salvation, God revealed to the Fathers and Prophets in the Old Testament the fulfillment of the promise and His economy (dispensation) of the Incarnation and Redemption. There are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of the Savior; all peoples have waited for the true God.

This is confirmed by the visit of the Magi from Persia. The same goes for philosophers thirsting for wisdom, happiness and joy. They spoke about Him

and desired Him without naming Him. We see how Paul the Apostle does not hesitate when preaching to the pagans of Athens, to quote their poets Epimenides and Aratus as having written

prophetically about the God of Jesus Christ: "For 'in Him we live and move and have our being,' as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed His offspring.'" (Acts 17:28)



This is our God, the God of the living and the dead and the God of all peoples and generations and the Savior of our souls, so let us go to meet Him. The goal of the 40 days fast that began on the 15th of November is to ready us meet this incarnate God face to face, and to make our hearts a manger that receives the One Who came down from heaven and accepted to be born as a Child, to raise us to His kingdom.

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 8 – Resurrectional Troparion

You descended from on high, O Merciful One!

You accepted the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!//

O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to You!

Tone 2 – Troparion of the Forefathers

Through faith You justified the Forefathers,

betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles.

These saints exult in glory,

for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit:

she who bore You without seed.//

So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

Tone 6 – Kontakion of the Forefathers

You did not worship the graven image,

O thrice-blessed ones,

but armed with the immaterial Essence of God,

you were glorified in a trial by fire.

From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying:

“Hasten, O compassionate One!

Speedily come to our aid,//

for You are merciful and able to do as You will!”

SCRIPTURE READINGS

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

Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers,

and praised and glorified is Your Name forever!

Epistle: Colossians 3.4-11 (Forefathers)

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things, in which you once walked when you lived in them, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. But now you must put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language from your mouth; do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with its deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in

knowledge according to the image of Him who created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Gospel: Luke 14.16-24 (Forefathers)

Jesus spoke this parable saying, "A certain man gave a great supper, and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'

"But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to examine them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

"So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'

"And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

New Dep. Michael Heady

Selma Zorka

Penny Hall

Petre Ristevski

Ev.Mem. Theodora Borisenko ('12)

Michael Ferris ('14)

John Nepsha ('54)

Peter Pavloff ('60)

Paul Borisenko ('81)

William Malovance ('91)

Nicholas Radivan ('95)

Health & Salv.

Archpr. Peter

Archpr. Moses

Mat. Margaret

Mat. Anne

Mat. Trudi

Michal

Annika

Sarah

Archpr. Michael

Pr. Christopher

Mat. Jennifer

Andrew

Gideon

Dn. Nicholas

Sophia

Kevin

Jon

Tanya

Jovan

Julia

Tom

Tina

Jennifer

Gail

Stacy

Jeramie

| | | |
|-------------|------------|----------|
| Olivia | Ryan | Daniel |
| Parker | Nathan | Laura |
| Christine | Kara | Dorothy |
| Larry | Christine | Vasiliy |
| Rollie | Jon | William |
| Joseph | Zoey | Wanda |
| Nadia | Dominic | Cindy |
| Brendan | Declan | Mary |
| Tanya | Hudson | Linda |
| Christopher | Ayden | Ivanka |
| Nina | Hyland | Susan |
| Renee | Jason | Denise |
| Carissa | Ted | Valerie |
| Cynthia | James | Jeffrey |
| John | Pamela | Aaron |
| Olga | Erin | William |
| Janie | Alexander | Jamie |
| Michael | Ronald | Karen |
| David | Theodore | Dale |
| Sharon | Robert | Jack |
| Mark | Craig | Joyce |
| Jerry | Chuck | Junia |
| Michael | Scott | Anna |
| Anthony | Mark | Sandra |
| Daryl | Christine | Linda |
| Diane | Dale | Stephen |
| Carla | Pauline | Megan |
| Susan | Mary | William |
| Timothy | Timothy | Jim |
| William | Lisa | Camille |
| Paul | Lois | John |
| Joseph | Michael | Martha |
| Linda | Janice | Mark |
| Claudia | Ken | Michelle |
| Elizabeth | Debbie | Steven |
| Carol | Jacqueline | Brenda |
| Snezana | Cindy | |

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We have only two weeks left of **Advent** to prepare to receive the new-born Christ through added **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving**. It is also a season appropriate for making a **confession**.

2022 Church Calendars are now available in the Narthex.

For **Bible Study** this week, read **Daniel 4-6**.

This Sunday is your last chance to **order gift cards** through our **Scrip** program and have them by Christmas. Also, if you do any shopping through Amazon, you can begin at www.smile.amazon.com and select "Protection of the Virgin Mary Church" as your charity of choice.

Your **flower donation** will help us fill the Church with poinsettias as usual for the services of Nativity. Parishioners are also always invited to bring in their own flowers to help beautify the Church on feast days.

On Sunday, January 2, after Divine Liturgy we will have our **annual Christmas potluck**. The Church school will lead us in singing carols.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 14: **Parish Council** meeting @ 7pm

Dec 15: **Bible Study** @ 7pm

Dec 16: **Faith Enrichment** @ 10am

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

Dec 25: **Festal Divine Liturgy of Nativity** @ 9am
No evening Great Vespers

Dec 31: **Great Vespers for the Circumcision of Christ** @ 6pm

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

Jan 2: **Christmas Potluck and caroling** after Divine Liturgy

Jan 5: **Vespers of Theophany** with the **Blessing of Water** @ 6pm

Jan 6: **Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Theophany** @ 10am

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$1,807

A Reflection on Prayer

by our Diocesan Chancellor, Archpriest Paul Jannakos

Prayer is the most needful and natural of all human abilities, more natural to us than eating and drinking, or breathing even. When unceasing prayer arises and abides within the human heart, “all is well.” And “all is well” because the deepest and most powerful effect of prayer is how it unites us to God in a manner that is beyond any “logical” definition. Indeed, here is a mystery deeper and far richer than any human experience that is merely fleshly, cerebral, psychological, or emotional. Because when one has glimpsed even just a small bit of genuine prayer, “crumbs from the Master’s table,” (Matt. 15:27) then all is light, peace, joy, gratitude, and love. “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Just as Moses “turned aside” to see the Burning Bush, believers are simultaneously confirmed in their faith by these many little epiphanies of grace that are revealed in a life of prayer. In their pure and unceasing prayer, many of the saints (e.g. Macarius of Egypt, Seraphim of Sarov) thus shone with the uncreated light of Christ. Those who fail to discover or recover prayer remain stuck in a flat, joyless “one story universe.”

But for all believers, this higher and richer experience of authentic prayer will inevitably come with a price. Because, simply put, following Christ means allowing oneself to become “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3), which does not mean to be deficient of the Holy Spirit but to become wholly vulnerable to and naked before God by being stripped of every worldly affection and security. Only then is the heart wide open to the Lord, without anything blocking His way (riches, possessions, relationships, etc.). Poverty of spirit is a standard prerequisite to all prayer. Without it, no one feels the need to pray, and prayer subsequently becomes a dead, empty formality. “For these people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8).

It is also important to know that prayer will never be something static but will always be in flux. Over the course of a single day, one’s experience of prayer will ebb and flow, and it will be necessary to accept this up-and-down aspect of prayer as something that exists on account of our own human weakness and sinfulness. Our minds and hearts will be distracted, and the inner fire of prayer

will be dampened and extinguished. Along with this, there will be periods of time—weeks and months most likely—where the believer will go from the highest peak of prayer to the lowest, deepest valley. There will be times, that is, when we may experience the ecstasy of prayer and “move mountains” (see Mark 11:23), knowing that it is not we who pray but literally “the Holy Spirit Who intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:26). These are moments when the heavens open and when one knows for sure that God’s Kingdom really exists.

Yet there will be times, too, where those who strive for prayer will feel completely abandoned by any graceful consolation for weeks and perhaps even months at a time. Here is the experience of a terrible loneliness and despair like none other. The heart will become hollow and gloomy, and the words of prayer will turn to ashes in one’s mouth. Such an apparent forsakenness is not far from what the Lord Himself experienced while hanging on His cross: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46).

All of the saints perfected by grace over a lifetime of striving experienced, countless times over, this “long, dark night of the soul.” They were each tested by God. They each needed to become another Elijah in the wilderness, hopeless and alone, in a state of sorrow that defies the imagination. “Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than any of my fathers” (1 Kingdoms 19:4). Many beginners in prayer reach this first test and find it far too painful. Such a startling flip between the fullness vs. absence of grace is more than they can bear. And it’s unbearable because they have yet to learn true humility and patience.

Yet those who continue in the way of the Lord and fight for a life of prayer learn, eventually, that these “wilderness experiences” and tests are the Lord’s way of not only furrowing down deeper into the heart, but also a way of hungering and thirsting for God that reveals the essence of every human person. Only when one cries out in prayer “longitudinally,” for the whole of the human lifespan, faithfully and unremittingly no matter how full or empty one inwardly feels, will the Lord turn prayer into the kind of bliss that is a foretaste of the Kingdom to come.

Glory to God for all things!