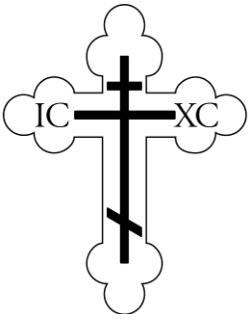


Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church



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

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 26, 2021 Sunday after Nativity

The Holy Prophet-King David, Saint Joseph the Betrothed, and Saint James the Brother of the Lord are commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity.

St Joseph the Betrothed was of the lineage of King David. He had four sons from his previous marriage: James, Judah and Simon (or Symeon), and three daughters: Esther, Martha, and Salome, who was the mother of Saint John the Theologian. After he became a widower, Saint Joseph led a life of strict temperance. He was chosen to be the husband and guardian of the Most Holy Theotokos, who had taken a vow of virginity. An angel told him of the Incarnation of the Son of God through her. St Joseph was present when the shepherds and the Magi worshiped the new-born divine Infant. On the orders of the angel, he fled into Egypt with the Mother of God and the Infant Jesus, saving them from the wrath of King Herod. He

lived in Egypt with the Virgin Mary and the divine Child, working as a carpenter. Saint Joseph reputedly died at the age of one hundred. Saint Joseph is commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity.

The Holy Apostle James, Brother of the Lord, was the eldest son of Joseph the Betrothed from his first marriage with Solomonia. The Apostle James is remembered after the Feast of the Nativity of Christ together with his father Joseph and the Prophet-King David, since he accompanied his family on the Flight into Egypt and lived there with the Infant Jesus, the Mother of God and Joseph. Later, he returned to Israel with them. After the Ascension of the Lord, St James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, gaining the great esteem not only of Christians, but also of Jews. He was thrown from the roof of the Jerusalem Temple because he had publicly preached to the people about the God-Manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Apostle James is also commemorated on October 23.

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 4 – Troparion of Nativity

Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
were taught by a star to adore You,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Orient from on high.//
O Lord, glory to You!

Tone 2 – Troparion for the Sunday after Nativity

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph,
to David, the ancestor of God;
you have seen a Virgin great with child;
and you gave glory with the shepherds;
you worshipped with the Magi,
and received the news from the Angel//
Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Tone 3 – Kontakion for the Sunday after Nativity

Today godly David is filled with joy;

Joseph and James offer praise.

The glorious crown of their kinship with Christ fills them with great joy.

They sing praises to the One ineffably born on earth, //

and they cry out: “O Compassionate One, save those who honor You!”

Tone 3 – Kontakion of Nativity

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One,

and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One!

Angels with shepherds glorify Him!

The wise men journey with the star, //

since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 2 – Sunday Prokeimenon (Psalm 117)

The Lord is my strength and my song; / He has become my salvation!

Tone 4 – Prokeimenon for the Sunday after Nativity (Psalm 67)

God is wonderful in His saints, / the God of Israel!

Epistle: Galatians 1.11-19 (Sunday after Nativity)

Brethren: I make known to you that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Gospel: Matthew 2.13-23 (Sunday after Nativity)

At that time, when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young

Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”

When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.”

Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

New Dep. Thomas Reibly
Presv. Tulla Poteres
Michael Heady
Selma Zorka

Penny Hall
Ev.Mem. John Nepsha ('16)
John Shkoda ('35)
Alexsandra Sadovay ('59)

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2022 Church Calendars and Stewardship Envelopes are now available in the Narthex.

Thomas Reibly, husband of our former parishioner Sheila Reibly, passed away on December 19. Visitation is Tuesday, December 28 from 10am until funeral service at 12pm at Calumet Park Funeral Chapel in Hobart.

For **Bible Study** this week, read **Daniel 10-12**.

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

It is time again for the various committees and ministries to get your **annual reports** in for the parish meeting. Reports must be submitted either to Fr Jacob or Council President Melody Rozdelsky no later than January 15. The annual meeting will be February 13.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 29: **Bible Study @ 7pm**

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**

Jan 15: **Annual Reports** due for parish meeting on Feb 13

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$3,414

2021 Nativity Message

of his Eminence, our Archbishop Paul

Beloved Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest:

Christ is Born! — Glorify Him!

Man was made in the image of God, but he sinned, and lost immortality. He fell from the divine and better life, enslaved

completely by corruption. Now the wise Creator fashions him again, for He has been glorified.

(Verse from Ode 1 of the Nativity Canon)

This verse from the Nativity Canon underscores the reality of what we continually deal with in the Christian life. It seems like we need to repeatedly visit this verse, as we don't seem to get it. I fear that our Diocese and our churches continue to be affected by polarizing issues. These issues continue to revolve around ideology, morality, religious practices, politics, and now how to address the continuing pandemic with its new variants. Many have told me that they are weary of dealing with the latter issue. They are sick and tired of talking about it. People just want to move on and focus on the Gospel and the spiritual well being of our people. But the disagreement continues in the Diocese over how to move on.

What does the Feast of our Lord's Nativity offer us this day to help us address these issues in our daily lives?

First, we need to see that in this Mystery of God becoming Man, our Lord identifies with the whole of our fallen humanity. He identifies with us and becomes fully man for all; whether we are conservative or liberal, white or black, capitalist or socialist, High church or Low Church, cradle or convert, pro-mask or anti-mask, and pro-vaccine, or anti-vaccine. The Church has had to address these realities since the time of the Apostles (just read Galatians, 1 Corinthians, or Acts, and you will see what I mean). But our Lord in assuming our fallen nature refashions and recreates us so that we might transcend the visible and find our fulfillment as human beings in the world that is invisible. Thus the Litya verse from Compline also says:

"Today heaven and earth are united, for Christ is born. Today God has come to earth and man ascends to heaven."

In His person, the eternally begotten Son of God becomes the Son of man and assumes our fallen nature to fulfill our true humanity in His Kingdom. He transcends the sectarianism and polarities of our time by becoming the New Adam, the "first-born from the dead." Our entire fallen humanity is recreated and united in Christ. St. Gregory the Wonderworker makes this point in his discourse on the Nativity:

"The Ancient of Days is become a Child, to make people children of God."

The Prophet Isaiah and St. Paul speak of the fruit of this reality in verses that are read during the services of the Nativity:

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in my entire holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:6-9)

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27-28)

The incarnation of Our Lord teaches us how we can address the fallen realities of our time in our witness to the Truth in love. His Nativity shows us that all we believe, teach, and do in the Church is intimately tied to its fulfillment in His Kingdom. The minute we separate this relationship we end up preaching religion, ideology, or legislated moral codes. As to the continuing challenges the variants of Covid present us, I wish we could find a way to discuss these concerns in light of the teachings of our Faith. By not doing so, all of the above issues become ends in themselves and thus idols; this has nothing to do with gospel, the Good News of Christ’s life-creating Death, and His Glorious Resurrection.

I pray that the Lord continue to enlighten us in our celebration of the Great Feast of His Holy Nativity and upcoming Holy Theophany. Please pray for me. May the Nativity of Our Lord bring you blessings, joy, and peace.

With love in Christ,

The unworthy Archbishop Paul

Christ is Born!