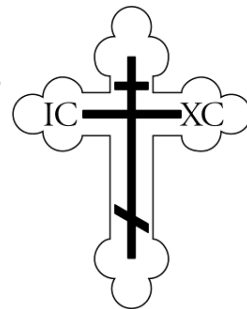
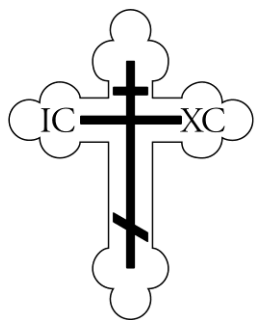


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Merrillville, IN 46410
(219)947-4748
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 24, 2023

Sunday of the Forefathers

Forefeast of the

Nativity of our Lord

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 4 – Resurrectional Troparion

When the women disciples of the Lord
learned from the angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection,
they cast away the ancestral curse
and elatedly told the apostles:

“Death is overthrown!

Christ our God is risen, //

granting the world great mercy!”

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

Mary was of David's seed,
so she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem.
She bore in her womb the Fruit not sown by man.
The time for the birth was at hand.
Since there was no room at the inn,
the cave became a beautiful palace for the Queen.//
Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.

Tone 1 – Kontakion of the Holy Forefathers

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 (Sunday before Nativity)

Brethren: By faith, Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the

promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding 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 accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being 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, for 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 with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded 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 it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "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. Joseph Bloomfield

Michael Benka

Eli Zak

Jerry Caravana

Matthew Catchur

Archpr. Lazar Kostur

Nathan Carras

Larry Shaver

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Health & Salv. | Ronald | Nathaniel |
| Bp. Benedict | Mary Ann | Tamara |
| Archpr. Peter | Dara | Dennis |
| Mat. Cynthia | Jaroslava | Maria |
| Hierom. John | Andrew | Elizabeth |
| Pr. Gregory | Andrew | Jonah |
| Mat. Beverly | Vadim | Jamie |
| Pr. Patrick | Hanna | Kyleigh |
| Mat. Anne | Viktor | Lauren |
| Mat. Catherine | Gerald | Kyle |
| Kevin | Christine | Mark |
| Jon | Olga | Christopher |
| Tanya | Janie | Betty |
| Jovan | Sharon | William |
| Rollie | Tanya | Grace |
| Nadia | Renee | Janet |
| Claudia | Ashton | Sarah |
| Paul | Michael | Angela |
| Carol | Chris | Lauren |
| Snezana | Nina | Jack |
| Ryan | Carissa | Elizabeth |
| Nathan | Duane | Melissa |
| Kara | Elizabeth | Carolynn |
| Djuro | Olga | Nicholas |
| Paula | Klaudia | Natalie |
| Christopher | Tom | Lissa |
| Karen | Diane | Elizabeth |
| Alexandra | Brandi | William |
| Jonathan | Joyce | Katherine |
| Christine | Galina | Linda |
| Zoey | Thomas | Margaret |
| Dominic | Diane | Linda |
| Declan | Stephanie | |
| Hudson | Cindy | |

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

Special Petition at the Augmented Litany:

We pray, O Lord our God, for all those who suffer from acts of war, especially the victims in Ukraine, Israel, and Palestine. We pray for Your peace and Your mercy in the midst of the great suffering of

Your people. Vouchsafe to accept the prayers of the Church, so that by Your goodness, peace may return to all peoples; O Lord, hear us and have mercy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Sunday is our annual parish Yolka and Christmas potluck. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex to indicate what dish you plan to bring.

The **Women's Book Group** will meet on January 25 @ 6pm to discuss the book *On Living Simply: The Golden Voice of St. John Chrysostom*.

The **Advent** season of preparation for our Lord's birth began on November 15. During this time, we rededicate ourselves to **prayer**, especially by making a **confession**, we **fast** as we are able, and we find opportunities to **give to those in need**.

Please make any **end-of-year gifts** to the Church by **next Sunday**, December 31. Gifts received after that date will be recorded in January, as our Treasurer begins to close out the books for the year.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 24: **Vigil for the Nativity of Christ @ 6pm**

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

Dec 31: **Annual Parish Christmas potluck after Divine Liturgy
Festal Vespers for the Circumcision of the Lord @ 6pm**

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

Jan 5: **Royal Hours of Theophany @ 9am
Festal Vespers of Theophany with Blessing of Water @ 6pm**

Jan 6: **Divine Liturgy of Theophany with Blessing of Water @ 10am**

Jan 19: **Red Cross Blood Drive 12-6pm**

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$3,427

Archpastoral Message on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ

of His Eminence, our Archbishop Daniel

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Venerable Monastics, and Beloved Faithful,

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”
(Isaiah 9:2)*

As we gather in the spirit of joy to celebrate the Nativity of Christ, these words of the holy Prophet Isaiah resound once again in our ears and in our hearts. Year after year, this ancient yet ever-new prophecy takes on renewed significance as we contemplate the mystery of Our Savior’s birth. In the Gospel of Saint Luke, we recall how the watchful shepherds, tending to their flocks in the dark of night in the hills of Bethlehem, suddenly experienced “the glory of the Lord shining on them” (*Luke 2:9*). The prevailing darkness of this world was pieced by a heavenly brightness: Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, who even now continues to enlighten the darkness of our earthly existence.

How do we today come to experience this Light, which dispels darkness and destroys it? We encounter it primarily as Divine Love: that Love which has altered the course of history, freed us from evil, filled our hearts with peace and joy, and brought life to the world. In the darkness of our night, the Love of God has been revealed to us: it is Jesus, the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. He is “God’s love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 5:5*).

Yes, “the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all people” (*Titus 2:11*): in our jubilant celebration of the Lord’s birth, we take to heart that Christ our Lord irrupted into human lives and affairs as we went about our usual business, and radically changed all things. The grace of God, this unmerited and transformative gift, continues to be given to us in the Person of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. The Feast of the Nativity poignantly reminds us that God’s love is unceasing, and that it outlasts the most harrowing circumstances and the worst instances of human sin. It is this love for mankind that we find encapsulated in the well-known words of the Gospel of St John: “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (*John 3:16*).

The love of God, revealed in his Son by the Holy Spirit, is neither conditional nor temporary, and does not it depend on us or our “worthiness.” Even when we fall into sin, God continues to love us—

but how often do we wrongly perceive God's goodness as a response to our virtue, or divine punishment in our misfortunes! Yet despite our weakness and sinfulness, God's love remains steadfast: it does not change nor is it fickle; it is faithful and ever patient. This is this incomparable gift that we encounter as we celebrate the Nativity of Christ. Each year, we remember and celebrate that the Lord has revealed himself to us as absolute, tender, and unfailing Love. His glory does not overwhelm us; rather, he is born in complete and utter poverty to bring all of his creation into the abundant wealth of his love.

Beloved Flock, "the grace of God has appeared" to shine forth in your life, in your hearts, and in the world we inhabit. Receive this grace as the unmerited gift of God's love, and the light of Christ, born on this sacred night, will shine forth in you and through you, piercing the darkness that envelops this world.

Be assured of my fervent prayers and best wishes for you and all your loved ones during this holy season. May your celebration of the Lord's birth may be adorned with radiance and joy, and may the coming New Year be enriched with abundant blessings, through the unceasing prayers and intercessions of our Most Holy and Most Pure Lady, the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.

With love in the Newborn Savior,

+DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest

Glory to God for all things!