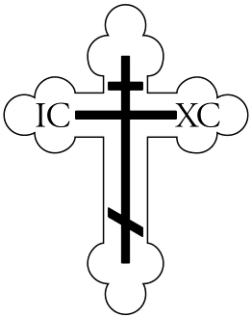


Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Merrillville, IN
(219)947-4748
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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
hall after Divine Liturgy
for coffee hour.

December 21, 2025

Forefeast of Nativity

Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ

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 2 – Troparion for the Holy Ancestors

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 of Nativity

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 is born to raise up again what fell in former times, His image.

Tone 1 – Kontakion for the Holy Ancestors

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 2 – Kontakion for the Forefeast

He Who holds the earth in the hollow of His hand
now is beheld in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling bands.
We offer prefestal hymns to his Mother, who maternally rejoices//
having held to her bosom the Son of God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 4 – Sunday Prokeimenon (Holy Fathers)

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 worshipped, 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. Ryan Holmes	Mary Kuchta (1952)
Ev. Mem. Thomas Leschishin ('18)	Samuel Hulick (1961)
Nicholas Chetsko ('24)	Charles Kuzma (1967)
Gabriel Myers (1938)	Max Marchuk (1981)
Duko Kosta (1942)	

Health & Salvation	Jacob	Alla
Archpr. Peter	Carol	Betty
Mat. Cynthia	Snezana	Mary Ann
Hierom. John	Ryan	Maria
Mat. Anne	Nathan	Londyn
Valer	Kara	Hattie
Nun Theodora	Sarah	Lisa
Rollie	Jamie	Isabella
Claudia	Kyleigh	Alessandra
Mary Ann	Lauren	Jennifer
Raymond	Kyle	Steven
Edward	Gilbert	Sergei
Charlotte	Carolynn	Heidi
Betsy	Amelia	Jennifer
Klaudia	Aaron	Ethan
Maja	Marcietta	Logan
Gerald	Charles	Tanya
Janet	Rosemary	Christopher
Gerald	Nicholas	Olga
Rebecca	Natalie	Michael
Christopher	Jovan	Ivanka
Moses	Meagan	Silas
Helena	Marley	Christine
James	Kimberly	Sara
Elijah	Stephanie	John
Lydia	Robin	Kirby
Nina	Leonardo	Loretta
James	Daniel	Alex
Rebecca	Tiffany	Trudi
Jesse	Yelena	Michal
Autumn	Anastasia	Anika
James	James	Sarah
John	Rita	

To add the name of a loved one recently departed or on the anniversary of their repose, or someone living and in particular need of prayer, please speak 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, Russia, 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, hearken and have mercy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Advent is rapidly coming to an end! **Confession** is still available by appointment this Tuesday or before and after the services of Christmas Eve.

For **Bible Study** Monday, read **2 Chronicles 6-10**.

After Liturgy on Sunday, December 28 will be our annual **Parish Yolka**. This is a **potluck Christmas celebration** including a performance of the **Nativity story** by the **Church School** and singing Christmas carols.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 22: Bible Study @ 7pm

Dec 24: Royal Hours of Nativity @ 9am

Vesperal Liturgy of Nativity @ 10:30am

Nativity Vigil @ 7pm

Dec 25: Festal Divine Liturgy of Nativity @ 9am

Dec 28: Parish Yolka after Divine Liturgy

Dec 31: Festal Vespers for the Circumcision of our Lord and St Basil the Great @ 6pm

Jan 1: Festal Divine Liturgy for the Circumcision of our Lord and St Basil the Great @ 9am

Last Week's Gifts to the Lord: \$4,814

Nativity Message **of His Eminence, our Archbishop Daniel**

To the Clergy, Monastics, Faithful and Friends of the Diocese of the Midwest

*Thy 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 Thee, the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee!*

Beloved Sons and Daughters in Christ,

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

I greet you all in the joy and peace of Christ as we gather with family, friends, and our fellow believers to celebrate in the bright light and brilliance of the Nativity of Our Lord!

The liturgical texts of the Feast of the Nativity are filled with references to light and darkness. From the text of the troparion of the feast, quoted above, to the words taken from the Prophet Isaiah, *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light* (Isaiah 9:2), and in many other scriptural and liturgical texts, we are reminded that Christ, the Light of the World, was born into this world as the Light which extinguishes all darkness, the darkness of sin and of death, and the darkness experienced in human life. Even one of the season's most popular carols reminds us of this. In *We Three Kings*, we hear the refrain, "Oh star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright, westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light." The ***Perfect Light*** of which we sing is Christ Himself.

Throughout these past forty days, we have been preparing ourselves to celebrate the cherished and bright feast of the ***Birth in the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ*** through its fasting discipline, its call to prayer, the exhortation to reach out in love to a needy world, and its appeal to participate more fully in the Divine Services, the Church has called us to reflect more deeply upon the relationship between darkness and light that we encounter in various spheres of human life—principally in the areas of our physical, spiritual and moral life.

During the most recent days of this year's period of preparation for the celebration of our Lord's Nativity, we have been witnesses to an increase in the powers of darkness extending around the globe. Violence, continuing wars, the hateful and senseless taking of innocent human life, brutal social upheaval, and the attempted destruction of the moral order, among other influences and efforts, have been experienced around the world in so many different and intense ways in these past few weeks and days. However, whether by the taking of one human life, the attempt to harm or destroy a people or peoples, or a movement to destroy the moral order, these are all an exercise of darkness trying to overtake the light. This, however, is ultimately impossible. The Light – the Light of Christ –

will always illumine and bring brightness, order, and peace. The Light that shone in the darkness of the night of the Savior's birth will always overcome the darkness. The Light of Christ will always shine through and overcome the darkness of this world. This is good news, the good news we now celebrate.

I invite you all to join with me in pondering and celebrating this great mystery of the Birth of Christ. Our communal celebration of the Lord's Nativity offers us the opportunity to pause and reflect upon the Mystery of the Incarnation: that God became man, took upon Himself our human flesh and human life, was Incarnate of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit and **became man**. This is not only a celebration of Christ's birth, and neither is it merely a time to ponder the depths of the mystery of the Incarnation — it is much more. It is also a profound proclamation, the Good News, that *light has entered the world's deepest night*. The Birth of Christ proclaims that no darkness is too mighty or too powerful for Christ's light to penetrate it. Just as the star guided the wisemen from the East, so the light of Christ, the Perfect Light, guides every individual who is willing to seek after Him. May we, too, be guided by His Light.

May the Light of Christ shine brilliantly in your hearts and homes as you gather with family and friends to celebrate this bright and joyous feast. Be assured of my prayers for you and all your loved ones.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

With love in the Incarnate Son of God,

+DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest

Glory to God for
all things!