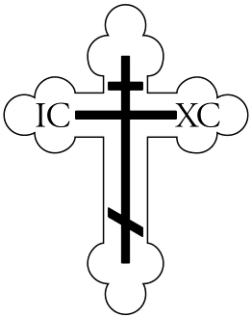


# Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago  
and the Midwest  
Orthodox Church  
in America



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Merrillville, IN  
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Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle  
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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 28, 2025

### Sunday After the Nativity

Sts. Joseph the Betrothed, David the  
King, and James the Brother of the 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 God is risen, //  
granting the world great mercy!”

### **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 4 – Resurrectional Prokeimenon (Psalm 103)**

O Lord, how manifold are Your works;  
in wisdom have You made them all.

### **Tone 4 – Prokeimenon for the Saints (Psalm 67)**

O Lord, how manifold are Your works;  
in wisdom have You made them all.

## **Epistle: Galatians 1.11-19 (Sunday after the Nativity)**

Brethren: 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, 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

N.Dep.	Ryan Holmes	Luba Bondor (1987)
Ev. Mem.	Joseph Trich (1924)	Nicholas Lash (1993)
	Simeon Marchuk (1935)	Anne Mathis (1993)
	Simeon Shinkarenko (1971)	
Health & Salvation	Carol	Betty
Archpr. Peter	Snezana	Mary Ann
Mat. Cynthia	Ryan	Maria
Hierom. John	Nathan	Londyn
Mat. Anne	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	Christine
Helena	Marley	Sara
James	Kimberly	John
Elijah	Stephanie	Kirby
Lydia	Robin	Loretta
Nina	Leonardo	Alex
James	Daniel	Trudi
Rebecca	Tiffany	Michal
Jesse	Yelena	Anika
Autumn	Anastasia	Sarah
James	James	Nicholas
John	Rita	Jarosalva
Jacob	Alla	

*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**

Please join us in the hall today for our annual **Parish Yolka**. This is a **Christmas celebration** including a performance of the **Nativity story** by the **Church School** and singing Christmas carols.

There will be **no Bible Study** tomorrow.

**2025 Church Calendars** are in the narthex for pick-up. Please observe **the limit of one calendar per adult** until everyone has had a chance to pick theirs up.

**2025 stewardship envelopes** are also ready for pick-up in the Narthex. It is a great help to our volunteers who count and record your gifts to use the numbered envelopes assigned to you. If you are a member of this parish and have not received a box of envelopes, our treasurer Mike Gruszyk will get you one.

### **Mark your calendars:**

**Dec 31: Festal Vespers for the Circumcision of our Lord @ 6pm**

**Jan 1: Divine Liturgy for the Circumcision of our Lord @ 9am**

**Jan 5: Royal Hours of Theophany @ 9am**  
**Vigil of Theophany @ 7pm**

**Jan 6: Festal Divine Liturgy with the Blessing of Water @ 9am**

**Jan 8: Guys' Night Out** at Maxim's in Merrillville @ 6pm

**Jan 13: Men's Breakfast** at Bob Evans in Valpo @ 7:15am

**Jan 17: Catechism @ 4:30pm**

**Jan 24: TELOS meeting** for young adult ministry @ 4:30pm

**Last Week's Gifts to the Lord:   \$5,020**

# Nativity Message

## of His Beatitude, our Metropolitan Tikhon

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, beloved children in the Lord,

*When it was time for thy coming upon earth, the first taxation of the world was held; and then thou madest ready to enroll the names of all who believed in thy birth. For this cause Caesar published such a decree, since thy timeless and eternal kingdom was newly made manifest.* – St. Germanus, Doxastichon at the Praises

**Christ is born! Glorify him!**

In one of her most famed hymns, the venerable Cassia draws parallels between the reign of Caesar and the reign of Christ: “When Augustus reigned alone upon earth,” she says, “the many kingdoms of men came to an end,” and when Christ was born in that reign, the many gods of the nations were done away. As the many cities of the world passed under one rule, all the nations came to believe in one God.

The relationship between these two reigns, two rules – that of Rome and that of Christ – goes beyond poetic parallels, however. Divine providence arranged for the birth of the Lord at precisely the right moment, when the Pax Romana, the peace secured by the ascendancy of the Roman Empire, ensured that the Good News of Jesus Christ could travel freely throughout the Mediterranean world, from Jerusalem to Italy, to Gaul and North Africa, and beyond it, to barbarian lands and the Persian Empire.

At the same time, we must not forget the role played by Roman rule also at the end of the Savior’s earthly life, when the Lord gave himself up for the life of the world: he was flogged by Roman soldiers, condemned by a Roman governor, pierced by a Roman lance. In the end, it was a Roman officer who recognized what had taken place: “Truly this was the Son of God.”

Roman imperial authority paved the way for the coming of Christ in the flesh and made possible the apostolic preaching of the Gospel; this same authority sentenced God himself to death. Thus, Rome occupies an ambivalent place in the tradition of the Church; as a symbol, it is bivalent. On the one hand, we speak of the New Rome and the Third Rome: the reign of Christ established on earth in

Roman garb. Our bishops, with their eagle rugs and their sakkoi, still bear the trappings of Eastern Roman emperors.

On the other hand, in New Testament—in St. Peter’s first epistle and St. John’s Apocalypse (1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 17–18 et passim)—we see Rome equated with Babylonian harlotry, with the old Jerusalem that kills the prophets and rejects those sent to her. Rome appears both as the city of God on earth and the supreme city of the world, the dominion of the flesh and of the devil.

However, St. Germanus of Constantinople, in the doxastichon I quote above, offers a new and higher perspective. He does not only draw parallels, as does St. Cassia; neither does he assign Roman rule an incidental, albeit providential, role. Instead, he views Rome as the direct instrument of God: “For this cause Caesar published such a decree,” so that the kingdom of God might appear and Christ might enroll his faithful in the book of life. Whatever else Caesar’s decree may have done, whatever Caesar may have intended, the cause for that decree was determined by God, and it was part of his holy design, his plan; God’s providence was the agent, the decisive factor.

When God made the world out of nothing, he did so in order that the world might come to know him and love him, and so that he could show his love to the world—so that he could love the world. This does not apply only to the world as an abstract whole; it applies to each of us, who are microcosms, little worlds unto ourselves. God loves each of us with his whole love; in love, he made everything for each of us—for me and for you. As St. Paul says, “all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:21–23).

All of history points toward the coming of Christ; all the actors on the world stage, all the empires of men, all the civilizations from furthest antiquity to the end of the world: all of this has existed, exists, and will exist solely for the sake of his First and Second Coming. Moreover, since his Coming was for our sake—not his own, since, in his divine aseity, he has no need of anything—this means that all the world exist for us, for each of us—for me and for you. All of history took place, takes place, will take place, for your sake.

Rome stands as a potent symbol of all this history, of the entire world of human events. Thus, it is inevitable that Rome both serves as a vehicle of the Gospel and an instrument of the Passion, both as an ally and an enemy of Christ. The Church, in her earthly sojourn, has known the two aspects of Rome as well: the Rome of Diocletian

and the Rome of Constantine; the Rome of the catacombs and the Rome of the Hagia Sophia.

So it is in our own lives. Sometimes the circumstances of life bring us joy, sometimes they bring us pain. But no matter what happens to us, we must know, as the great spiritual testament attributed to St. Seraphim of Vyritsa says, that all of this was from the hand of the loving God. Every weal, every woe, every ease, every hardship: all of this was from him. Without all these events, known and unknown, past, present, and future, you would not be who you are. All of this is a gift from God to you, so that you could receive a still greater gift: God himself.

Today he appears as a newborn Child in the arms of his most pure Mother; soon she shall bear him to the temple of sacrifice, and thence to exile in Egypt. Thus, both in happiness and in trials, let us imitate her in always extending to him our heart's embrace. Holding him close, we will come to understand, with St. Germanus and St. Seraphim, that everything that has taken place, from the very beginning of time, has happened so that we could come to this moment, to this cave, to this manger, and experience the Advent of God in the flesh. Everything has happened so that he could be ours, and we could be his.

To our infant Savior, the Creator and Sustainer of all, the true Love of our hearts, our deepest Desire, the Fulfillment of our being: to him be all love and adoration, together with his Father and his All-holy Spirit, throughout the ages of this world and unto endless eternity.

Greeting you with the joy of Christ's Nativity, with my primatial prayers and blessing,

+ Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Glory to God for  
all things!