



Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Lord's Day - 12-26-2021 Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

27th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 2. Second Day of the Feast of the Nativity . Synaxis of the Most Holy

Theotokos . Sunday after Nativity. Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord. Hieromartyr Euthymius, Bishop of Sardis (ca. 840). Ven. Constantine of Synnada (8th c.). Ven. Evaristus of the Studion Monastery (9th c.). Saint Nikódomos the Sanctified of Tismana, Romania (Macedonia—1406). Hieromartyr Constantine the Russian of Lavra on Mt. Athos (Mt. Athos—1743).

Tone 2 Troparion (Resurrection)

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal,
Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead.
And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!”

Tone 4 Troparion (Feast)

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!

Tone 2 Troparion (Righteous Ones)

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph,
to David, the ancestor of God;
thou hast seen a Virgin great with child,
and thou didst give glory with the shepherds;
thou didst worship with the Magi,
and didst receive the news from the Angel.//
Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Tone 3 Kontakion (Righteous Ones)

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
Thee!”

Tone 3 Kontakion (Feast)

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!

Tone 2 Prokeimenon (Resurrection)

The Lord is my strength and my song; / He has become my
salvation. (Ps. 117:14)
V. The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over
to death. (Ps. 117:18)

Tone 4 Prokeimenon (Righteous Ones)

God is wonderful in His saints, / the God of Israel. (Ps. 67:35a)

Tone 2

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!
V. May the Lord hear thee in the day of trouble! May the name of
the God of Jacob protect thee! (Ps. 19:1)
V. Save the King, O Lord, and hear us on the day we call! (Ps.
19:9)

Tone 4

V. Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness! (Ps. 131:1)

Galatians 1:11-19 (Epistle, Sunday After)

But I make known to you, brethren, 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.

Matthew 2:13-23 (Gospel, Sunday After)

Now 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.”

HOLY ONES

Commemoration of the Holy Righteous David the King, Joseph the Betrothed, and James the Brother of the Lord

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. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, their commemoration is moved to December 26. At an early date, some churches in the East began to commemorate certain important figures of the New Testament at the time of Theophany, and later during the Nativity season. In Syria, for example, Saint Stephen (December 27), Saints James (April 30) and John (September 26), and Saints Peter and Paul (June 29) were commemorated near the end of December.

In Jerusalem, the saints mentioned above were combined with a feast that the Jews of Hebron celebrated on December 25 or 26 in honor of the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob. Later on, the Christians substituted Saint James (October 23) for Jacob, and then the commemoration of the Brother of the Lord became associated with his ancestor King David. In time, Saint Joseph was linked with Saints David and James.

Saint Joseph 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. Saint 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. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, his Feast is moved to December 26. The Righteous Joseph is also commemorated on the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers.

The Holy Prophet-King David was a forefather of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. The youngest son of Jesse, David shepherded a flock of sheep belonging to his father. He was distinguished by his deep faith, and he zealously fulfilled the will of God.

During a battle with the Philistines, he vanquished the giant Goliath in single combat, which decided the outcome of the war in favor of the Israelites. He endured many things from King Saul, who saw him as a favorite of the people and his rival. David, however, showed his own decency and magnanimity. Twice, when he had the possibility of killing Saul, he did not do so.

After Saul and his son perished, David was proclaimed king of the southern part of Israel, and after Saul's second son was killed, he became king of all Israel. He built a new capital, Jerusalem ("the City of Peace"), and a new tabernacle. His great wish to build a Temple was not realized. It was foretold to him that his son would build the Temple.

The life of the Prophet David was darkened by a grievous falling: he took Uriah's wife for himself, and sent Uriah to his death in battle. He was also an example of great repentance, humbly and with faith bearing the sorrows sent in punishment for his sins. Saint David gave a model for repentance in Psalm 50/51. King David died in great old age with steadfast faith in the coming of the promised Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. His divinely-inspired Psalter is widely used in the divine services and in personal prayers. (See the Books of Kings and Chronicles).

The holy Prophet-King David is invoked by those facing a difficult situation, such as an interview, etc.

Second Day of the Nativity of our Lord

On the day after the Nativity of Christ we celebrate **the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos**, and come together to give her glory and praise. This is the second day of the three day --

Winter Pascha. Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity—concretely and historically—is the humanity He received from Mary. His body is, first of all, her body. His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.

Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding us that the source and foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."

Father Alexander Schmemmann, *The Services of Christmas*

The name of today's festival signifies the gathering of the faithful in order to praise and glorify the All-Holy Virgin, who gave birth to our Savior.

On the first day of the Nativity of the Lord, the Church glorifies the Redeemer of the human race, and the blessed deliverance which freed the sinful world from the snares of the Enemy. On the second day of the Nativity of the Lord, which was such a great event for our salvation, the Church calls upon us to honor the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord, in an appropriate manner.

The day after many of the Church's Feast Days is called the Synaxis - such as the day after the Nativity of the Theotokos, when the righteous Joachim and Anna are commemorated; or the day following the Feast of Theophany, when we honor Saint John the Baptist, etc.

The Feast of the Synaxis of the Mother of God dates back to very ancient times. In the IV century, some Holy Fathers, such as Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus (May 12), were already preaching about it. In the ancient Menaia, the Feast of the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos was called "the Nativity Gifts." This refers to the gifts which the Magi from the East brought to the newborn King of the Jews - the Divine Child Jesus. The Feast of the Synaxis of the Mother of God was also called "the Flight into Egypt."

On December 26, the early Church commemorated the Wise Men who came to worship the Savior, and the **flight into Egypt**, as well as the Synaxis of the Mother of God. That is why some icons of the Nativity of the Lord depict His Birth, the worship of the shepherds and the Magi, as well as the Flight into Egypt. Sometimes the inscription reads "The Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos."

Now, however, we commemorate "the Adoration of the Magi: Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthasar, and also the shepherds in Bethlehem who were watching their flocks and came to see the Lord" on the first day of the Nativity (December 25), but the Flight into Egypt is commemorated separately on December 26, the second day of the Nativity.

Before the massacre of the 14,000 Holy Innocents (December 29), an Angel warned Saint Joseph to take the Child and His Mother and flee to Egypt and to remain there until the Angel brought him word that it was safe for him to return to Nazareth, "for Herod will seek the child to destroy him" (Matthew 2:13).

In the icon of the Flight into Egypt there are mountains. The Virgin sits on a donkey with her Child, looking back at Joseph. He holds a staff, and his cloak is thrown over his shoulder. A young man (Tradition says this was Saint Joseph's son James, the Brother of the Lord) leads the donkey carrying a rush basket, and looks back at the Virgin. Behind them is a fortified town with idols toppling from the walls. This event was prophesied by Isaiah: "Behold, the Lord sits on a swift cloud,¹ and shall come to Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and their heart shall faint within them" (Isaiah 19:1); and the Prophet Hosea alludes to it: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son" (Hosea 11:1). This is also mentioned in the Church's hymns.

¹ On the Great Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (Sticheron 4 on the Praises), that cloud is seen as an image, or type, of the Virgin.

For nothing done by God from the beginning of time was more beneficial to all or more divine than Christ's Nativity.

--*St. Gregory Palamas, Homily on the Nativity of Christ*

“Bethlehem” Icon of the Mother of God



Within the magnificent Basilica of Christ’s Nativity in Bethlehem, the wonderworking icon of the **Most Holy Theotokos, known as Bethlehemitissa, stands out.** It is located in a prominent proskynitarion on the right side of the southern entrance of the Holy Cave of the Nativity. We have a Bethlehemitissa copy for your veneration today.

The infinite affection which emanates from the eyes of the Panagia’s icon, and her serene gaze, sweetens and exalts the hearts of the faithful. The clothing on the Icon of the Theotokos is covered with luxurious fabrics and precious gems, and makes a distinct impression.

There is no clear historical data concerning the origin of the icon. There is speculation that it came from Russia, and pious tradition particularly links it to the Russian Empress Catherine, who visited the Holy Land and Bethlehem after a miracle performed by the Virgin. She donated her imperial garments in order to clothe the “Mistress of the World” with them. According to tradition, she also gave her jewelry to be placed on the sacred icon, forcing empresses not to wear rubies (or diamonds, according to others) any longer, for this was the exclusive privilege of the “Queen of the Angels.”

Undoubtedly, the Bethlehem Icon has a special place in the hearts of all the Orthodox. The Virgin Mary, the Lady of the Holy Land, is the tender mother who obeyed God’s command and brought our Savior and Redeemer into the world; and at the same time she is the mother of us all and an intercessor before her Son in all our appeals. She is our ‘guardian angel’. In our moments of difficulty, we turn spontaneously to face her icon and her grace, always invoking her as “our fervent protector and helper.

Sts. Peter and Paul - 2022

Announcements

Services Upcoming:

Sat. Jan. 1st Great Vespers – 4pm

Sun. Jan. 2nd – Divine Liturgy 9:30a

Wed. Jan. 5th – Great Vespers with Blessing of Waters – 6pm

Thur. Jan 6th -Holy Theophany-9:30a

Procession to and Blessing of Cusswego Creek

House Blessings – Schedule with Fr.

(Blessing of Edinboro Lake and French Creek – Jan 16th and 23rd)

Sat. Jan. 8th Great Vespers-4pm

Sun. Jan. 9th Divine Liturgy – 9:30a

-Annual Meeting (From December)

--Parish Education Resumes

ACTIVITIES

This Week –

Parish New Years Eve Party-Dec. 31

5pm-8pm - ByoB Games and snacks

at the Parish Hall – Altar Boys will have a meeting at 4pm with Fr. Daniel

This Month

House Blessings begin...

Preparation for house blessing at Theophany

The Church teaches us to sanctify/glorify or make holy everything: dwellings, places of work, all our pursuits, and the fruits of our labor. The home blessing at Theophany represents a renewal of our lives in Christ. Washed in the baptismal waters, our homes become temples of the Holy Spirit for the fulfillment of the will of our Heavenly Father. This is why the Church blesses everything that can be found in a Christian home; and if something is not worthy of being blessed, then there should not be a place for it in the home of a Christian.

After you have set-up your appointment with the parish priest here is how to prepare for your house blessing: All who reside in the household should make every effort to be present for the Blessing. We gather in the dining room. On your dining room table or family icon corner, set:

- A lit candle

- A Theophany icon or another icon of Christ
- Make a list of the baptismal names of family members you wish to pray for (one for living and departed)
- Optional items
 - A small bowl (if you need more Holy Water for your home).
 - A bunch of fresh green basil or other greens bundled together – (if not the priest will have one)

Make sure your rooms are lit (if at night) and open doors to rooms for ease of entry. Also please remember to “turn off your electronic devices.” ☺

If you have pets, make sure they become accustomed to the visitors so they don't bark or jump up during the service. We encourage you to have your pets blessed, too.

When the priest arrives everyone in the house should gather around the table/family altar and join in prayer and singing.

If there are children, they usually carry the icon and a candle to lead the priest from room to room. If not the head of the household will lead the priest.

After the blessing we all gather back around the icon for the concluding prayers.

Although parishioners often wish for the priest to stay for dinner or supper after the blessing of their home, it is necessary to remember that the priest may be blessing several homes in one day and cannot physically eat several dinners and/or suppers in a row. Do not be offended if the priest must hurry away to another home. If you want the priest to spend more time with you please ensure in advance that the priest has time after the blessing of your home.

When a priest visits, there is a pious custom in some places that the family makes a donation to the priest for gas and other expenses. This is appreciated, but it should not be thought of as a requirement. The scripture tells us “*Freely you have received, freely give*”. The priest comes to the home because he wants God's blessing to be upon it, and to know those in his flock better and to be available to them.



MOTHER BLESSING

All ladies of our parish are invited to a Mother Blessing for expectant mother Judy Lynch on Saturday, January 15, 2022 starting with Vespers at 4pm and potluck dinner at 5pm.

Please RSVP to Anna Rachocki.