

Ambo

ST. THEODOSIUS ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL



Mailing:

733 Starkweather Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

www.sttheodosius.org

Eric Seddon, Parish Secretary
1(216) 574-4886

Protodeacon Daniel Boerio
1(216) 513-5307
dboerio79@yahoo.com

Subdeacon Michael Tabeling,
Sacristan

Reader Julius Kovach,
Ecclesiarch & Choirmaster

Erin Zawolowycz
Ambo Editor

Divine Services

Eve Sundays & Feast Days

5:00 PM Confessions

6:00 PM Great Vespers

Sundays and Feast Days

8:40 AM 3rd and 6th Hour

9:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Please check weekly schedule
for specific days (last page)

AMBO: Articles for publica-
tion should be submitted to:

ambo-theodosius

@googlegroups.com

DECEMBER 20, 2020

FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF
CHRIST
REPOSE OF ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT



The Nativity According to the Flesh of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus
Christ (December 25)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city's inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

"I behold a strange and most glorious mystery," the Church sings with awe, "Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid." (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three shepherds watching their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord (Saint Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magi by a wondrous star. Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Theophylactus, commenting on Saint Matthew's Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was "a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star." Saint Demetrius of Rostov says it was a "manifestation of

divine energy" (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi "fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt. 2:11).

The present Feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, "Brethren, observe the feasts; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month." In another place it also says, "Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world."

In the second century Saint Clement of Alexandria also indicates that the day of the Nativity of Christ is December 25. In the third century Saint Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of Saint Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia (December 28) were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church. There is evidence of this in the works of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose of Milan, Saint John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church of the fourth century.

Saint John Chrysostom, in a sermon which he gave in the year 385, points out that the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is ancient, and indeed very ancient. In this same century, at the Cave of Bethlehem, made famous by the Birth of Jesus Christ, the empress Saint Helen built a church, which her mighty

son Constantine adorned after her death. In the Codex of the emperor Theodosius from 438, and of the emperor Justinian in 535, the universal celebration of the day of the Nativity of Christ was decreed by law. Thus, Nicephorus Callistus, a writer of the fourteenth century, says in his History that in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian established the celebration of the Nativity of Christ throughout all the world.

Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople in the fifth century, Sophronius and Andrew of Jerusalem in the seventh, Saints John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maium and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople in the eighth, the Nun Cassiane in the ninth, and others whose names are unknown, wrote many sacred hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which are still sung by the Church on this radiant festival.

During the first three centuries, in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Cyprus, the Nativity of Christ was combined together with the Feast of His Baptism on January 6, and called "Theophany" ("Manifestation of God"). This was because of a belief that Christ was baptized on anniversary of His birth, which may be inferred from Saint John Chrysostom's sermon on the Nativity of Christ: "it is not the day on which Christ was born which is called Theophany, but rather that day on which He was baptized."

In support of such a view, it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23) when He was baptized. The joint celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Theophany continued to the end of the fourth century in certain Eastern Churches, and until the fifth or sixth century in others.

The present order of services preserves the memory of the ancient joint celebration of the Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany. On the eve of both Feasts, there is a similar tradition that one should fast until the stars appear. The order of divine services on the eve of both feasts and the feasts themselves is the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world. "The angel said to the shepherds, 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, glorifying God and saying: 'Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' Those who heard these things were astonished at what the shepherds told them concerning the Child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:10-20).

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is a cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind, "for the Savior is Born!"

Concurring with the witness of the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, in their God-inspired writings, describe the Feast of the Nativity of Christ as most profound, and joyous, serving as the basis and foundation for all the other Feasts.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

FAITH ENRICHMENT ON HOLD UNTIL 1/14/2021

Faith Enrichment is on hold until January 14th, 2021. Please contact Subdeacon Leon Felon at (440) 666-7601 if you have any questions.

A HUGE THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THIS YEAR'S *ANGEL TREE* SUCH A SUCCESS! EVEN WITH THE PANDEMIC, WE HAD 26 PARTICIPANTS. MAY GOD BLESS YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS.

-DAN MORRIS

From the Desk of Fr. Adamcio...

THE WINTER PASCHA

Today we continue our journey to Bethlehem to worship the Second Person of the Holy Trinity as He becomes incarnate through the Most Holy Theotokos, the Ever-virgin Mary. But, we begin a new chapter in our liturgical worship: we sing the hymns of the Prefeast.

Writing in his exemplary book *The Winter Pascha*, Fr. Thomas Hopko makes the case for comparing the Nativity of Christ to Pascha itself. While this may seem a bit of a stretch, if we think and pray about it, there is a definite connection between the two.

Fr. Thomas writes: “The Lord’s birth and baptism are directly connected to His dying and rising. He was born in order to die...the harmony between the events is overwhelming...Jesus lay as an infant in the cavern in the reign of Caesar Augustus that He might lay in the tomb under Pontius Pilate. He was hounded by Herod that He might be caught by Caiaphas...He was worshiped by wise men that the whole of creation might adore Him in His triumph over death.” This takes the Feast of the Nativity out of the modern, secular celebration of this day (which sometimes seems to infect our own understanding of the importance of the day), replete with parties, gift giving, and sumptuous dinners, and places it in its proper perspective.

The texts sung at Vespers and Matins from this time until the Feast itself include verses of the Prefeast which elucidate the importance of the Feast. While these verses are seldom sung outside of cathedrals and monasteries (which sometimes have a daily cycle of services), we usually do not hear them. The preparation for the Nativity of Christ has not attained the prominence of the Great Fast’s preparation for Pascha, there are certain similarities: the length of the preparatory fast (forty days), the fasting itself, and the texts for the prefeast.

Fr. Thomas continues: “Originally there was but one festival in the Christian Church for the Lord’s appearing. It was called the “festival of lights,” and it was connected both to the Jewish festival of the season, as well as to the pagan celebration which took place at the

time of year when the sun stopped its southern march and began to move again towards the north, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness in the natural order. This feast for the Christians was the feast of *Epiphany*, which literally means “appearing” or “manifestation,” properly called *Theophany*, which literally means the appearance or manifestation of God, and was kept on January 6. It was given this name, obviously, because God appeared on earth in the person of His Son, and manifested His glory in Him who called Himself the “Light of the world.”

“The separate celebration of Jesus’ Nativity apart from the one general celebration of His appearance on earth - which originally included all aspects of His coming, from His birth to His public manifestation at His baptism in the river Jordan - was consciously done by the Christian Church, first in the West and later in the East, to offset the pagan holiday of the “Nativity of the Invincible Sun.” This pagan festival was celebrated on the twenty-fifth of December. It was a day of religious observance for those who worshiped the heavenly bodies, particularly the sun, as gods. When pagans were liberated from this worship and were blessed to adore the true God as Christians, it was only natural that the Church would replace the erroneous festival with the true one, thus giving genuine significance to a day which was already special in the life of many of its new members. It appears that the main hymn of the feast of Christ’s Nativity in the Eastern Church was formulated as a conscious polemic against paganism, with a very pointed flaunting of the fact that those who formerly worshiped the stars, including the sun, were taught by a star to worship the True Sun, God’s Son Jesus, who gives, and is, the True Light.”

*Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shown to the world the light of wisdom*

*For by it those who worshiped 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!*



PRAYER REQUESTS



Departed:

Archbishop David

Patriarch Irinej

Marguerite Mihal (*Paul Mihal's mother*)

Joseph Rusynyk

Elsie Conrad

Special Intentions:

Deacon Paul Mitchell (*Tom Mitchell's father*)

Subdeacon Theodore Lentz

Reader Paul Pangrace

Arlene Czajkowski

Child Mary Kate Zweidunger

Child Vivian Sherer

Melissa (*cousin of Mary Ann Kovach*)

Elizabeth (Betty) Balasz

Marie Borland

Horia Dascalescu

Debra Ellis

Gregory Galan

Aleksei Green

Virginia Haupt (*Lisa Theodore's mother*)

Don Hinkl

Matthew Hunly (*Phyllis Gindlesperger's brother-in-law*)

Diane Kearsey (*Janice Tkacz's sister*)

Annamarie Luvison (*Daughter of Kaite Ellis-Luvison*)

Chris Magee (*Erin Zawolowycz's brother*)

Paul Mihal

Natalya Miller (*Arlene Neale's great-niece*)

Andrew Mytrohovich

Debra Parhamovich (*Karen Felon's sister*)

Grace Parhamovich (*Karen Felon's mother*)

Jim Paulitzky (*Jerry Czajkowski's son-in-law*)

James Peter Petkac

Susan Reese (*friend of Jerry & Arlene Czajkowski and Betty Balasz*)

Elena Rich (*Jerry Czajkowski's daughter*)

Andrew Sykaluk

Elaine Sudnick (*Joy Pfeiffer's mother*)

Tony Sykaluk (*friend of Lydia Mytrohovich*)

Janice Tkacz

Joanne Theodore (*Lisa Theodore's mother-in law*)

Gayle Vidovitch

Eleanor Wachovec (*friend of Karen Felon*)

Robert Walsh (*friend of the Felons*)

Colleen Walsh (*friend of the Felons*)

Erin Zawolowycz

Kristin Robinson

Janet Budko (*sister-in-law of Arlene Neale*)

Laurie Budko (*niece of Arlene Neale*)

Mary Kay Weber

Mirta Szewczyk (*friend of Tatiana*)

Mickey O'Brien (*friend of Arlene*)

Kelly Buehner

Anna Sykaluk (*friend of Tatiana*)

Edward Zewczyk (*friend of Tatiana*)

Joe Czajkowski (*son of Jerry*)

Patrick Gallagher

Elliott Udell (*grandson of Michael Udell*)

Constance Zimmerman (*Cindy's cousin*)

William Nasi (*brother-in-law of Kenneth Kovach*)

Jonathan Maas (*friend of Eric Seddon*)

Michelle Frampton (*cousin of Fr. Zdinak*)

Steve Bondor

Louis Klinar (*father of Bob Klinar*)

Jeanne Charles (*friend of Arlene Neal/Czajkowski*)

BIBLE READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF December 20

Dec 20

Gen 14:14-20
Deut 1:8-11, 15-17
Deut 10:14-21
Luke 24:36-53
Heb 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40
Matt 1:1-25

Dec 21

Heb 3:5-11, 17-19
Mark 9:42-10:1

Dec 22

Heb 4:1-13
Mark 10:2-12

Dec 23

Heb 5:11-6:8
Mark 10:11-16

Dec 24

Micah 5:2-4
Heb 1:1-12
Matt 1:18-25
Jeremiah (Baruch 3:35-4:4)
Gal 3:23-29
Luke 2:1-20
Isa 7:10-16, 8:1-4, 9-10
Heb 1:10-2:3
Matt 2:1-12
Isa 9:6-7
Heb 2:11-18

Matt 2:13-23

Gen 1:1-13
Num 24:2-3, 5-9, 17-18
Micah 4:6-7; 5:2-4
Isa 11:1-10
Jeremiah (Baruch 3:35-4:4)
Dan 2:31-36, 44-45
Isa 9:6-7

Isa 7:10-16, 8:1-4, 9-10
Heb 7:1-6
Mark 10:17-27
Heb 1:1-12
Luke 2:1-20

Dec 25

Matt 1:18-25
Gal 4:4-7
Matt 2:1-12

Dec 26

1 Tim 6:11-16
Matt 12:15-21
Heb 2:11-18
Matt 2:13-23

Dec 27

John 20:1-10
Acts 6:8-15, 7:1-5, 47-60
Matt 21:33-42
Gal 1:11-19
Matt 2:13-23

ST. THEODOSIUS IS NOW A SUBSCRIBER TO TITHE.LY

In response to requests to be able to donate electronically, we have set up a Tithe.ly account so people can donate either regularly or for special occasions online. Click here to see: <https://www.sttheodosius.org/donate> Special thanks to Council Vice President Cathy Weber and our new Webmaster Kate Zolikoff for making this happen.



Sunday, Dec 20

Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ
Repose of St. John of Kronstadt
3rd and 6th Hours read at 8:40 AM
Liturgy Begins 9:00 AM
After Liturgy, colors to be changed

Monday, Dec 21

Virgin Martyr Juliana of Nicomedia and those with her

Tuesday, Dec 22

Great Martyr Anastasia, "Deliverer from Bonds", her Teacher Martyr Chrysogonus and those with them

Wednesday, Dec 23

Holy Ten Martyrs of Crete

Thursday, Dec 24

Eve of the Nativity of Christ

Nun-martyr Eugenia of Rome and those with her
9:00 AM Vespers Divine Liturgy
4:00 PM Vigil for Nativity

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

2020



Friday, Dec 25

The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ

3rd and 6th Hours read at 8:40 AM
Liturgy Begins 9:00 AM

Saturday, Dec 26

Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos

3rd and 6th Hours read at 8:40 AM
Liturgy Begins 9:00 AM
Great Vespers 6:00 PM

Sunday, Dec 27

Holy Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen
Holy Righteous Ones Joseph the Betrothed, David
the King and James the Brother of the Lord
3rd and 6th Hours read at 8:40 AM
Liturgy Begins 9:00 AM