

# The Sunday before the Nativity of Christ (the Genealogy) which falls on the Paramon (Eve) of the Holy Nativity

The Ten Martyrs of Crete; New-martyr Nicholas; Venerable Nahum of Ochrid

Sunday, December 23, 2018

Tone 5; Eothinon 8

Apolytikion of the Resurrection (Tone 5)

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Apolytikion of the Forefeast of the Nativity (Tone 4)

Be thou ready, Bethlehem, Eden hath opened unto all. Ephratha, prepare thyself, for now, behold, the Tree of Life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the holy Virgin. Her womb hath proved a true spiritual Paradise, wherein the divine and saving Tree is found, and as we eat thereof we shall all live, and shall not die as did Adam. For Christ is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforetime.

Apolytikion of the Sunday before the Nativity (Tone 2)

Great are the accomplishments of faith; for the three holy youths rejoiced in the fountain of flames as though at waters of rest. And the Prophet Daniel appeared a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. Wherefore, by their pleadings, O Christ God, save our souls.

Apolytikion of our Patron, Michael the Archangel (Tone 2)

O ye foremost of the heavenly hosts, we beseech thee, though we are unworthy, pray that we may be encompassed with a shadow of thine unearthly glory; preserving us who kneel and cry endlessly: Deliver us from oppression since ye are the prince of the highest powers.

Kontakion of the Preparation of Christ's Nativity (Tone 3)

Today the Virgin cometh to the cave where she will give birth in an ineffable manner to the Word Who is before all the ages. Rejoice, therefore, O universe, when thou hearest it heralded: Glorify Him, with the angels and the shepherds, Who chose to be seen as a new-born babe, the God Who is before all the ages.

## Daily Readings

### THE EPISTLE (Sunday before the Holy Nativity)

Blessed are Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers.  
For Thou art justified in all that Thou hast done for us.

### The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (11:9-10; 32-40)

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

### THE GOSPEL (Sunday before the Holy Nativity; “the Genealogy”)

### The Reading of the Holy Gospel is according to St. Matthew (1:1-25)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was

the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, Who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ were fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call His Name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called His Name Jesus.

## The Synaxarion

On December 16 in the Holy Orthodox Church we commemorate the holy and glorious Prophet Haggai; Theophania the empress; and Modestos, archbishop of Jerusalem.

On this day we celebrate the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers (Ancestors) of our Lord Jesus.

## Verses

Receive joy, O Forefathers which lived aforetime,  
As now ye behold at hand Christ the Messiah.

Be glad, O Abraham, for thou art shown to be the forefather of Christ.

We remember all the holy Patriarchs of the Old Testament who prefigured or foretold Christ: Adam the first Father, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, the friend of God, Isaac, the fruit of the Promise, Jacob and the twelve patriarchs. We then commemorate those who lived under the Law: Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, and the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the twelve minor prophets; Elijah, Elisha, Zachariah, and John the Baptist; and finally the Virgin Mary, the intermediary between mankind and her divine Son. Indeed, the Lord Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to redeem humanity which bemoaned the weight of evil since Adam; to realize the promise made to Abraham; to change the Law of Fear into the Law of Love; and to give Resurrection and Life to mankind. This feast prepares us for the Nativity of Jesus Christ, placing before us the anticipation and hope for His coming among us.

By the intercessions of Thy Saints, O God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

### **A Note Regarding Holy Communion**

Since we understand Communion to mean that we have all things in common, sharing an identical Faith, *only* those who are members of the Orthodox Church and who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and recent Confession may participate in Holy Communion. (We invite all, however, to partake of the blessed bread which is distributed at the dismissal.) Please see the Pastor for inquiries on how to become a member.

## OFFERINGS

Holy Bread is being offered this morning by Eleanor Safady and family in loving memory of Fred Safady (+24 December, 2014), and Rose Sady (+26 May 2015). Memory eternal.

Holy Bread is also being offered by Waleed & Michelle Moujaes and family in memory of Shahadeh Moujaes (+22 December, 2006). Memory eternal.

Holy Bread is being offered this morning by Abeer & Mushir Khleif in memory of Yusra Rabadi (8 years) and Yagoub Khleif. Memory eternal.

Special offerings and requests for prayer are being made . . .

for Ned Toomey celebrating his birthday (December 26).  
May God grant him continued health and many years!

for Afath Khleif celebrating his eleventh birthday (December 22nd).  
May God grant him many years!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

December is "St. Ignatius Month" in the Antiochian Archdiocese. Members of the Order of St. Ignatius are assisting in the services this month. Reading the epistle this morning is: Michael C. Srour. For additional information on The Order visit their website: <[www.orderofstignatius.org](http://www.orderofstignatius.org)>.

### Parish Christmas Card

Our 2018 Parish Christmas card was mailed last week. The purpose of the card is to provide the convenience of having Christmas greetings extended to our hierarchs and parishioners by means of a group card. It also provides the schedule of services for the festal season. The Annual Christmas Card Project is a service which enables the church to financially benefit from the donations of our parishioners and friends of our community who are listed on the card. The order of the list of contributors is not alphabetical, but in a sequence based upon the date the request is received. We thank all who have supported our project this year and continue to support our parish in Christian stewardship.

**Note to Coffee Hour hosts: coffee and paper goods will be provided each week.**

#### **Holy Bread Offering List**

#### **Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar**

Dec 25 - John Apostolou and Marcia O'Dea

Dec 30 - Ramez & Rima Hage

Jan 01 - open

Jan 06 - open (Holy Theophany)

Jan 13 - the Azzam and Hallak families

Jan 20 - open

Dec 30 - Ramez & Rima Hage

Jan 06 - open

Jan 13 - the Azzam and Hallak families

Jan 20 - open

Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; [pastor@stmichaelvannuys.org](mailto:pastor@stmichaelvannuys.org)) to sign-up to offer Holy Bread and Cindy Tamoush at: (818-345-4363; [famtam5@socal.rr.com](mailto:famtam5@socal.rr.com)) to sign-up for the Coffee Hour.

## SCHEDULE OF FESTAL SERVICES

[The Sacrament of Confession with Absolution is available by appointment or up until 15 minutes prior to the services.]

### **THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST**

Monday, December 24<sup>th</sup> (Christmas Eve and *Paramon*)

The Ninth Royal Hour, 3 p.m.

Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great\* – 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 25<sup>th</sup> (Christmas Day)

Orthros and the Christmas Canon, 8:30 a.m., Divine Liturgy,\* 10 a.m.

[There is **no** fasting from December 25<sup>th</sup> to January 4<sup>th</sup>]

### **The Circumcision of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ and the Feast of St. Basil the Great (New Year's Day)**

Monday, December 31<sup>st</sup> (New Year's Eve) – Great Vespers, 5 p.m.  
with prayers for the New Year

Tuesday, January 1<sup>st</sup> (New Year's Day) – Orthros, 8:45 a.m.;

Divine Liturgy,\* 10 a.m., with prayers for the New Year

### **THE GREAT FEAST OF HOLY THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY)**

Friday, January 4<sup>th</sup> — The Ninth Royal Hour, 4:30 p.m. followed by  
Daily Vespers of the *Paramon* (Eve) of Theophany, 5 p.m.

Saturday, January 5<sup>th</sup> The Eve of Theophany (*Paramon*) – [observed as a strict fast day]  
Daily Orthros, 9 a.m., The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom\* 10 a.m.

Great Vespers of Holy Theophany, 5 p.m.

Sunday, January 6<sup>th</sup> — Festal Orthros, 8:30 a.m. followed by “The Great Sanctification of Water” immediately followed by The Festal Divine Liturgy

\* *Services with Holy Communion*



Hard to believe it's nearly 2019, but it's just around the corner!  
Please be sure to review the 2019 Coffee Hour sign-up chart in our kitchen.  
Reserve your choice date to honor a birthday, anniversary, memorial of a loved one or just a random date to host or co-host a coffee hour.

### Parish Council Members and Officers Elected and Appointed

We congratulate our newly-elected 2018 Parish Council Officers: Michael Mitchell, Chair; Connie Barilla, Vice-Chair; Eric Nelson, Secretary; and Kris Thabit, Treasurer. We sincerely thank the Council members whose terms have expired: Richard Tamoush and Subdeacon Richard Ajalat (completing the unexpired term of the late, Caren Deeb Kouri); also those who have completed a one-year appointed term: David Alexander, Amy Castillo and Regan Hines. Nominated and elected by acclimation on November 18, 2018 to serve a three-year Parish Council term are: Richard Ajalat, Regan Hines and Kris Thabit. Thee Council members appointed by the Chair and Pastor with the approval of the Council to serve a one-year term are: Julie Bitar, Eric Nelson and Dan Raju.

### Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Report Booklet

Due to our 50th Anniversary Celebration weekend, the Annual Meeting of the Voting Membership will be held on Sunday, February 24, 2019. In the best interest of time, a Report Booklet will be prepared for distribution \prior to the Annual Meeting. All Council officers, Standing Committees and Subsidiary Organizations should turn in their single page reports to the Church Office no later than Sunday, January 6, 2019 in order to be printed on time for distribution to the Voting Membership.

### 2019 Offering Boxes Now Available

If you use our offering envelopes each week for your pledge, your box is now available in the narthex with your name label.

## **“O Lord, I Have Loved the Beauty of Thy House” (LXX Psalm 25:7)** **Part Twenty**

*The following article, by Fr. Timothy Baclig, is the twentieth of a series of writings that helps us to understand how the relationship between the iconography, architecture and music of the Orthodox Church communicates the presence of the Kingdom of God in this world.*

We have explored in the previous articles how worshipping the Triune God in a Traditional Orthodox sanctuary includes a very intentional architectural design, iconographic imagery [εἰκῶν ("image") and γράφειν ("to write")], and the sound of prayerful voices for contemplative worship. We have also explained how a worshipper's preparation for being a participant in the Liturgy [Λειτουργία; "work of the people"] and the Sacramental life of the Church is directly related to the nature, time and season of the various services, also the atmosphere of the sanctuary, which includes what one sees and hears.

Our eternal destiny is: God's Kingdom. It is where our attention is directed at the start of every Sacrament with the following words: *Blessed is the Kingdom: of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.* With this exclamation the presiding bishop or priest sets our course in worship. While this destiny is announced and proclaimed, for us mortals who remain a part of time and space, God's Kingdom is still to be attained. Similarly, salvation is past (in all that Christ fulfilled by His atoning Sacrifice on the Cross), is also present (as you and I are "being saved" by the divine grace of God's Spirit), but is also not yet (to be culminated in the world which is to come; unto "the ages of ages"). As mortals, therefore, we are in a procession, if you will; something that also typifies a primary liturgical movement in Orthodox services.

In the early period of Liturgy of "The Great Church" (Hagia Sophia; Αγία Σοφία) in Constantinople (4th century), the entrance into the church began with the faithful who met the presiding bishop at his residence and sang hymns in their procession to the church. Antiphonal hymns were sung, as they are now, within the first part of the Liturgy, in a procession with the Gospel Book—through the main entrance of the church, ending at the Holy Altar, for the start of the lessons (Epistle and Gospel). It was a movement from "point A" (the residences) to "point B" (the Holy Altar). Today, this procession within the

Liturgy is from “point A” (at the Holy Altar) to “point A” (back to the Holy Altar). Similarly, what we know as “The Great Entrance,” was in the early period a procession from a place where the offerings of bread for the Liturgy were gathered and prepared (in a separate structure) prior to an entrance with the clergy to the Holy Altar in the church sanctuary at the time of the *anaphora* (offering) prayers.

Within the church sanctuary the Divine Liturgy depicts an unseen reality that is neither staged or contrived but experienced with the aid of Biblical prayers, images and hymns of remembrances that illumines the heart with the mind of Christ—who is King and is present by His Spirit. Perhaps one of the most vivid examples of this is seen in the Service of Crowning when a man and woman are united in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The crowns of the bride and groom are revealed. They are seen. However, they are not yet fully known or experienced. They are the rewards of martyrdom—something that is ultimately manifested in God’s eternal Kingdom from the experience of sacrificial love. The Sacrament becomes as the scripture clearly states: a revelation or the revealing of God’s glory. This was also evident following Christ’s miracle of changing the water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee where the Gospel records: “This the first of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and revealed His glory...” (John 2:11). It is worth noting that the only other time the Gospel similarly records Jesus’ glory being revealed in His earthly ministry was on Mount Tabor at His Holy Transfiguration (see Matthew 17 and Mark 9).

Therefore the Church imagery together with all of its melodies used within the space of an Orthodox sanctuary provide the *ethos* [ἦθος] of worship. It is “otherworldly.” And as such, cannot be compared to other gatherings. At the start of the *anaphora* [ἀναφορά] (the second half of the Divine Liturgy that focuses upon our “offering”) the Cherubic Hymn begins with the words: *We who mystically represent the cherubim and sing to the life-giving Trinity the thrice holy hymn, let us now lay aside all worldly care; that we may receive the King of all who comes invisibly upborne by the angelic hosts. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!* The hymn is a reminder that it is us: “we,” who are called to receive He who comes; and when present, *Alleluia*, becomes our response; an exclamation that means: “God is

here.” The Sacraments and prayer services of the church therefore provide us the means of gaining God’s perspective; being in His presence. And it is precisely for that reason that all of the images and sounds are seen and heard by us for a distinct purpose: providing us with an aid in our quest for God’s Kingdom.

As we have already stated, entering the church sanctuary must be with great humility and a true sense of thankfulness. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican typifies this posture and state of mind. The word eucharist [εὐχαριστία] literally means “thanksgiving.” The braggadocios attitude of the Pharisee in the parable who thanks God that he is “not like all other men...” is contrasted to the humility and contrite confession of the Publican who prayed: “God, have mercy on me, a sinner” (see Luke 18:9-14).

Black is the attire of the clergy who, from being in the world enters the church. It exemplifies our sinfulness and need of forgiveness and is expressed in the priest’s prayer said in entering the holy place of the sanctuary. But before doing so, the priest venerates the icon of Christ, the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) and the saints. This is done while saying a series of prayers beginning with: *Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us; for laying aside all defense we sinners offer unto thee, as Master, this supplication: have mercy on us... We reverence Thy spotless icon, O gracious Lord, and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God: for of Thine own good will Thou was pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh that Thou might deliver from the bondage of the enemy those whom Thou has fashioned. Wherefore, we cry unto Thee: Thou has filled all things with joy, O our Saviour, for Thou didst come to save the world.* The prayers are followed by the veneration of each icon. In other words, the prayers (and as in some services: sung melodies) are accompanied (or paired) with specific iconographic images. An icon is an “image” that written to express the theology of the Church. As such, icons are not artistic renderings. Nor are they personal interpretations or creative expressions. Icons convey the teaching of Orthodox Christian theology written in form and color. Icons present images in two-dimensions and are not three-dimensional. They provide us with a “reverse perspective” (as though we are being looked at from God’s perspective). Hence, they are venerated and not worshipped as idols. In the words of the late Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, they are for us

“windows into heaven.” They help us to gain a true perspective—God’s perspective. [End of Part XX]

Antiochian House of Studies Begins Class Enrollment  
[1020 Base Line Rd., La Verne, CA, 91750]

The following classes are scheduled for all interested: 1) Sacred Church Music with V. Rev. Anna Hakimeh (Arabic and English); to be held every other Saturday for 2.5 hours, beginning on March 2, 2019 at 10 a.m., \$600 [for further information contact Fr. Anania at: [fatheranantias@gmail.com](mailto:fatheranantias@gmail.com)] 2) Sacred Art of Iconography with Khouiryeh Randa Al Khoury Azar; seven classes planned for Saturdays (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.), and Sundays (1-6 p.m.); March 30-31, April 06-07, 13-15, and on May 18 (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.), \$600, plus \$150 for course materials [for further information contact Khouiryeh Randa at: [randa.Azar@gmail.com](mailto:randa.Azar@gmail.com)]. For registration contact: Anna Naser at 714-971-2244 or [annasgi@yahoo.com](mailto:annasgi@yahoo.com) for an application form.

## **Frequently Asked Questions When Completing a Pledge Form**

### **What is the reason for completing an annual parish Pledge Form?**

Each year planning for budgeted receipts and expenditures are an important part of being responsible stewards of Christ’s church. Some of our month-to-month expenses include: priest and staff salaries, utility and maintenance expenses, the payment of taxes on all investment (income) property (yes, churches do pay property taxes), and insurance. It is not uncommon for these expenses increase each year. It is a goal of our Parish Council to meet these expenses with the contributions of our members. The Pastor does not receive stipends (monetary gifts) for house blessings, baptisms, weddings and funerals if a family is not enrolled with the parish and completed an annual pledge form. The Pastor’s living expenses and allowances are included the Annual Budget of the parish.

### **What is an annual “Fair Share Commitment?”**

Each parish of the Antiochian Archdiocese pays 10% of its parish income to assist with the expenses of our bishops, Archdiocesan and Diocesan departments and programs. Over one-fourth of the Archdiocese budget is dedicated to youth programs. The annual payment to the Archdiocese from St. Michael Church is 10% of our parish income (excluding contributions received for the Building Fund, charity collections, special Archdiocese collections, and memorial gifts). This money is collected from our

parishioners from their first contribution to the church: \$50 for each adult and \$35 for each child (17 years of age or under) in a household. All additional funds pledged by our parishioners assist with the month-to-month expenses of the parish.

## Capital Funds Campaign Committee Recommends Building Fund Donation Tax Benefits

A charitable donation of long-term appreciated securities, i.e., stocks, bonds and/or mutual funds that have realized significant appreciation over time is one of the best and most tax-efficient of all ways to give. This method of giving has become increasingly popular in recent years. There are two main advantages: 1) Any long-term appreciated securities with unrealized gains (meaning they were purchased over a year ago, and have a current value greater than their original cost) may be donated to the church with the benefit of receiving a tax deduction for the full fair value of the securities—up to 60% of the donor's adjusted gross income; 2) since the securities/stock is being donated rather than sold, capital gains taxes from selling the securities no longer apply. And the more appreciation the securities have, the greater the tax savings will be.

Second: A Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) is an option for anyone 70.5 years of age or older. You are able to take advantage of withdrawing from your personal IRA (Individual Retirement Account) without paying Federal or State Taxes. This will give the donor an opportunity to fulfill their pledge. You would not be able to take a tax deduction on the donation, however, not having to pay Federal or State Taxes on the IRA withdrawal far exceeds the benefit of a tax deduction. [Your IRA deduction cannot exceed \$100,000 per year.]

In both of the above options the funds would need to be transferred from either your Securities Brokerage Account or IRA Account directly to the St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church Brokerage Account in order for the donation to qualify.

Third: Many corporations provide their employees with a “Matching Funds Program” to the charity of their choice. The amount may vary with each company. We suggest that you check with the Human Resources Department or the Comptroller of the company where you are employed to see if such a program is being offered.

St. Michael Church has benefited by all of the above from its members. For more information please speak with Ron Zraick, Chairman of the Capital Funds Campaign Committee <[ronaldzraick@yahoo.com](mailto:ronaldzraick@yahoo.com)>.

### On-line Orthodox Prayers for Parents

Parents: add a useful App to your iPhone! Simply go to: <<http://orthodoxtoolbox.com>>. You will also be able to create your own Prayer Rule that can be easily updated; set notification reminders; customize your prayer list with photos of your loved ones, and much, much more!

Upcoming Events (see the foyer bulletin board for more information)

St. Nicholas Cathedral New Year's Eve Celebration  
Sunday, December 31, 2018, 9 p.m., \$150/person  
for tickets phone: 818-903-0953

Saturday, January 26, 2019 - 50th Anniversary Reception and Banquet  
at the Odyssey Restaurant following Great Vespers (4 p.m.);  
Reception, 5:30 p.m.; Dinner, 6:30 p.m.

Annual Meeting of the Voting Membership - Sunday, February 24

**PASTORAL SERMON**  
**The Sunday Before the Nativity**  
**By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig**  
**December 22, 2018**

Each year, on the Sunday before Christmas in all Orthodox Churches we hear the genealogy of Jesus, recorded at the beginning of Saint Matthew's Gospel (1:1-25). It is actually one of two genealogies on Jesus presented by the Gospel writers in the New Testament of the Bible. The other is found in the Gospel of Saint Luke. In St. Luke's Gospel, however, the genealogical list is in reverse order, beginning with Jesus and ending with Adam. Each Gospel writer had his own reason for presenting a lineage. In fact, the names included in one Gospel, as well as those that were not included in the other, were intentional choices by each writer for the purpose of making a point.

St. Matthew's genealogy is chosen because it reveals that Christ truly became a man, taking on our nature. We hear from the text of the *Synaxarion*: "He was not a ghost, an apparition, a myth, a distant imagined god, or the abstract god of philosophers; such a god does not have a family tree. Our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He has flesh and blood, human ancestors—many of whom sinned greatly, like David, who also repented greatly."

**The value of the Gospel genealogies lies not in their legal or historical accuracy but rather in their spiritual meaning, they place an emphasis upon the fact that Christ did in fact become a man, but they also demonstrate the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Man's failure did not mean that it was all over, or that God had failed!**

Unique to the genealogy of Jesus in St. Matthew's gospel is that women are included, while in St. Luke's Gospel, they are not. In fact, one of the women mentioned, whose name is Rahab, was a Gentile prostitute. The list also includes: Tamar, who committed incest, Ruth a Gentile, and even the adulteress, Bathsheba. David is mentioned, who not only committed murder, but was also an adulterer. **St. Matthew intentionally demonstrates that the Lord's incarnation was the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. By being born a man in human flesh, the Lord completely identified with the human race, with men and women of flesh and blood, failings and all. And this is what Christmas is all about.**

Again from the text of the *Synaxarion* we hear: "By taking on human nature, the Son of God became like us in all ways, in flesh and blood, in mind and soul, and in heart and will. He differed from us in only one way: He did not sin. Since we know that Christ's human nature remained sinless, He is also fully divine, and He shows us the way in which we can avoid sin, and so improve and transform our human nature."

**St. John Chrysostom says that Christ was not embarrassed by the skeletons hidden in His ancestors' closets. The conclusion of the genealogy is the beginning of a new generation – the age of the Messiah – and we are part of it as Christians. The age of preparation and promise is over; the *fullness of time* has arrived – a new age of completion and fulfillment. Very shortly we will celebrate what is the culmination of this wondrous season: It is the Great Feast of Holy**

Theophany: The baptism of our Lord by John in the River Jordan. It is the Feast which is the full revelation of God as Trinity: the Divine Son of God as *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world*, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the confirming word of God the Father.

### Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Son of David, Son of Abraham, the Son of Mary, as we behold your humble birth, we pray Thee: be merciful unto us sinners, and renew us by your presence, cleansing us from all sin as we now draw near to Thy holy table and dare to partake of your Holy Body and precious Blood. Sanctify our souls, purify our thoughts, cleanse our minds and deliver us from the Evil One. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory: of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. A-men.

EOTHINON 8

الايوثينا 8

STONE 5

اللقن 5

### THE FOREFEAST AND THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST (THE GENEALOGY), TEN MARTYRS OF CRETE; NEW-MARTYR NICHOLAS; VENERABLE NAHUM OF OCHRID

#### طروبارية القيامة على اللحن السادس

إنّ القواتِ الملائكية ظهرت عند قبرك الموقر، فالحراسُ صاروا كالأمواتِ، ومريم وقفت عند القبرِ طالبةً جسدك الطاهر، فسببت الجحيمَ ولم تُجرب منها، وصادفت البتولَ مانحاً الحياة، فيا من قام من بين الأمواتِ، يا ربَّ المجدُ لك.

استعدّي يا بيتَ لحمٍ، فقد فتحتَ عدنُ للجَميعِ، تهَيّأي يا أفراثا، لأنَّ عودَ الحياةِ قد أزهَرَ في المغارةِ مِنَ البتولِ. لأنَّ بطنها قد ظهرَ فردوساً عقلياً، فيه الغرسُ الإلهيُّ، الذي إذ نأكلُ مِنْهُ نحيا ولا نموتُ مثلَ آدم. المسيحُ يُولدُ مِنْهضاً الصُّورةَ التي سقطتْ منذُ القديمِ.

#### طروبارية الأحد الذي قبل الميلاد على اللحن الثاني

عظيمة هي مفاعيلُ الإيمانِ، فبه ابتهجَ الثلاثةُ الفتيةَ القديسون في ينبوعِ اللهبِ كأنهم على ماءِ الراحةِ. ودانيالُ النبي ظهرَ راعياً للأسودِ كأنها غنمٌ. فبتضرعاتهم، أيها المسيحُ الإلهُ، خلصْ نفوسنا.

**طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع**  
أيها المتقدمون على الأجناد السماويين، نتوسلُ إليكم نحن غير المستحقين، حتى أتكم بطلباتكم تكتنوفوننا بظلِّ أجنحةِ مجدكم غير الهيولي، حافظين إيانا نحن الجائين والصارخين بغير فتور، أنقذونا من الشدائد، بما أتكم رؤساء مراتب القوات العلوية.

**قنداق تقدمة الميلاد على اللحن الثالث**  
اليوم العذراء تأتي إلى المغارة، لتلد الكلمة الذي قبل الدهور، ولادة لا تُفسر، ولا يُنطق بها، فافرحي أيتها المسكونة إذا سمعت، ومجدي مع الملائكة والرعاة، الظاهر بمشنته طفلاً جديداً، وهو الإله قبل الدهور.

## الرسالة

مبارك أنت، اله أبائنا، لأنك عادل في كل ما صنعتنا لنا.  
فصل من رسالة القديس بولس الرسول إلى العبرانيين.

يا اخوة، بالإيمان نزل إبراهيم في أرض الميعاد نزوله في أرض غريبة، وأقام في الخيام مع اسحق ويعقوب شريكه في الوعد ذاته، لأنه كان ينتظر المدينة ذات الأسس التي لله صانعها وبانيها. وماذا أقول أيضاً؟ الوقت يضيق بي إذا أخبرت عن جدعون وباراق وشمشون ويفتاح وداود وصموئيل. فهم بالإيمان أخضعوا الممالك وعملوا البر ونالوا المواعد وسدوا أفواه الأسود. وأخمدوا لهيب النار ونجوا من حدّ السيف، وتغلّبوا على الضعف وصاروا أبطالاً في الحروب وكسروا جيوش الغرباء واسترجعت نساء أمواتهن بالقيامة. وعذب آخرون بالضرب ورفضوا النجاة في سبيل القيامة إلى حياة أفضل، وقاسى آخرون الهزء والجلد، والقيود أيضاً والسجن. ورجموا ونُسروا وقتلوا بحدّ السيف وهاموا على وجوههم لابسين جلود الغنم والماعز محرومين مضايقين مظلومين، لا يستحقهم العالم، فتاهوا في البراري والجبال والمغاور وكهوف الأرض. فلم يحصل هؤلاء على الوعد، مع أنهم مشهود لهم بالإيمان، لأن الله سبق فأعد لنا مصيراً أفضل من مصيرهم وشاء أن لا يصيروا كاملين بدوننا.

# الإنجيل

## فصل شريف من بشارة القديس متى

سجل انتساب يسوع المسيح ابن داود ابن إبراهيم: إبراهيم ولد اسحق. واسحق ولد يعقوب. ويعقوب ولد يهوذا واخوته. ويهوذا ولد فارص وزارح من ثمار. وفارص ولد حصرون. وحصرون ولد أرام. وأرام ولد عميناداب. وعميناداب ولد نحشون. ونحشون ولد سلمون. وسلمون ولد بوغز من راحاب. وبوغز ولد عوبيد من راعوث. وعوبيد ولد يسي. ويسي ولد داود الملك. وداود ولد سليمان من أرملة أوريا. وسليمان ولد رحبعام. ورحبعام ولد أبيا. وأبيا ولد آسا. وآسا ولد يهوشافاط. ويهوشافاط ولد يورام. ويورام ولد عزيا. وعزيا ولد يوثام. ويوثام ولد أحاز. وأحاز ولد حزقيا. وحزقيا ولد منسى. ومنسى ولد

أمون. وأمون ولد يوشيا. ويوشيا ولد يكنيا وإخوته زمن السبي إلى بابل. وبعد السبي إلى بابل يكنيا ولد شألتيل. وشألتيل ولد زربابل. وزربابل ولد أبيهود. وأبيهود ولد ألياقيم. وألياقيم ولد عازور. وعازور ولد صادق. وسادوق ولد أخيم. وأخيم ولد أليود. وأليود ولد أليعازر. وأليعازر ولد متان. ومتان ولد يعقوب. ويعقوب ولد يوسف رجل مريم التي ولد منها يسوع الذي يدعى المسيح. فمجموع الأجيال من إبراهيم إلى داود أربعة عشر جيلا، ومن داود إلى سبي بابل أربعة عشر جيلا، ومن سبي بابل إلى المسيح أربعة عشر جيلا. أما ميلاد يسوع فهكذا كان: لما كانت أمه مريم مخطوبة ليوسف، وجدت قبل أن تسكن معه حبلى من الروح القدس. وكان يوسف رجلها باراً، فلم يرد أن يشهر أمرها، فعزم على أن يتركها سرا. وبينما هو يفكر في الأمر ظهر له ملاك الرب في الحلم وقال له: يا يوسف ابن داود، لا تخف أن تجيء بأمر أنك مريم إلى بيتك. فإن الذي كون فيها هو من الروح القدس. وستلد ابناً فسمّه يسوع، لأنه يخلص شعبه من خطاياهم. حدث هذا كله ليتم ما قال الرب على

لسان النبي: ها هي العذراء تحبل, فتلد ابنا يدعى عمانوئيل, أي الله معنا. فلما قام يوسف من النوم, صنع ما أمره به ملاك الرب, فجاء بامرأته إلى بيته, ولم يعرفها حتى ولدت ابنها البكر, فسماه يسوع.

### ملاحظة بخصوص تناول القربان المقدس

إن مفهومنا لتناول القربان يعنى عمومية المشاركة فيه لذوى العقيدة الواحدة، إلا إن المشاركة في سر القربان المقدس هنا مقتصر فقط على أعضاء الكنائس الارثوذكسية والذين يحضرون أنفسهم بالصلاة والصوم والاعتراف منذ فترة قريبة (وعلى كل حال، فإننا ندعو الجميع للمشاركة في الخبز المقدس الذى يوزع عند إنتهاء مراسيم القداس). رجاء مراجعة الكاهن. إذا رغبت أن تصبح عضواً في الكنيسة الارثوذكسية.