

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley
a Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys, California; 91406 stmichaelvannuys.org

His Eminence, Metropolitan SABA, of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian
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The Sunday before the Nativity of Christ (the Genealogy) Which Falls on the Pre-Feast (*Paramon*) of the Nativity of Christ

The Venerable Martyr Eugenia of Rome and those with her

Sunday, December 24, 2023

Tone 4; Eothinon 7

Apolytikion of the Resurrection (Tone 4)

Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast from them their parental condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world Great Mercy.

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 the *Paramon* of the Holy Nativity of Christ (Tone 4)

As the fruit of David's seed, Mary was registered of old with the Elder Joseph in the small town of Bethlehem, when she conceived with a seedless and pure conception. Behold, the time was come that she should bear her Child, but no place was found within the inn for them; yet the cave proved a delightful palace for the pure Lady and Queen of all. For Christ is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforetime.

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)

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God.

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 24 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Venerable Martyr Eugenia of Rome and those with her.

On this day, the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, we have been enjoined by our holy and God-bearing Fathers to make commemoration of all them that from the beginning of time have been well-pleasing unto God, from Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, according to genealogy, as Luke the Evangelist hath recounted historically; and likewise

for the Prophets and Prophetesses, especially of Daniel the Prophet and the three holy youths.

It is also known as the Sunday of the Holy Genealogy. We remember the aforementioned names, those in the Old Testament who were related to Christ by blood, and those who spoke of His Birth as a man. In the Divine Liturgy, we shall read of Jesus Christ's lineage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. In this way, the Church shows us that Christ truly became a man, taking on human nature. 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, but like David, also repented greatly. Yet, all of these righteous ones in every age had been well-pleasing to God because they loved Him. 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 could 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.

By their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.

OFFERINGS

Holy Bread and sacramental wine are being offered by George, Basima and Milad Sayegh for the Sayegh and Almarji families, their children, and for the repose of the servants of God, Issa Almarji, Salima Ballout, Eada, Esshak, Nissrin, Talina, Kabila and Jamila.

Holy Bread is also being offered by Father Timothy Baclig with prayers for the continued health of his family, Michael & Elizabeth, Andrew, James and Katherine.

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

by Ron & Kathy Zraick in memory of the Rt. Rev. Paul Doyle who entered eternal life on +17 December, 2016. Memory eternal.

for the continued health of Ousama Zabaneh by his sister, Ghada.

for the speedy recovery of Marcia Terry and Brandon Terry.

SCHEDULE OF FESTAL SERVICES

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

Saturday, December 23rd - Great Vespers, 5 p.m.

The Sunday before the Nativity of Christ — Sunday, December 24th
Orthros, 8:30 a.m. followed by The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom,*
Great Vespers of the Holy Nativity - 5 p.m.

The Great Feast of The Holy Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ

Monday, December 25th – Orthros and the Christmas Canon, 8:30 a.m.,
Followed by the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great,* 10 a.m.

[There is **no** fasting from December 25th to January 4th]

The Sunday after The Feast of the Holy Nativity

Saturday, December 30th — Great Vespers, 5 p.m.
Sunday, December 31st — Orthros, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy,* 10 a.m.
Great Vespers, 5 p.m. with prayers for the New Year

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

Monday, January 1st (New Year's Day) – Orthros, 8:30 a.m.;
Divine Liturgy,* 10 a.m., with prayers for the New Year

THE GREAT FEAST OF HOLY THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY)

Friday, January 5th - The Eve (*Paramon*) [strict fasting (dry eating) observed]

The Great and Royal Hours, 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon

The Ninth Royal Hour, 3 p.m. Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great* – 4 p.m.

Saturday, January 6th — Festal Orthros, 8:30 a.m. immediately followed by
The Great Blessing of the Waters and The Festal Divine Liturgy*

* *Services with Holy Communion*

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA



Archbishop of New York
and Metropolitan of
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

Prot. no.: 486/2023

Nativity 2023

Reverend Hierarchs, Priests and Deacons, Esteemed members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, Beloved Sons and Daughters of our Antiochian Archdiocese of North America,

On this blessed occasion, I recall the familiar phrase we hear in the Advent prayers:

“Christ is born, glorify Him!”

It is the Church’s call to us since the beginning of the Nativity Fast. We remember it to keep the question alive: How do we glorify Christ? Present in our minds, the answer remains clear: we glorify Him through our actions, our lives, and our conduct. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Remember, the answer depends on each person’s readiness and response to this divine calling.

Many believe that Christ calls us to be good and nothing more. However, our Orthodox Christian faith teaches us that Christ came for us, and became man, not merely to make us good but to adorn our nature with His divinity. Good deeds are necessary, not as an end in themselves, but as the path to conform to Christ, striving for divine perfection.

Christian theology has succinctly summarized the theology of the Incarnation since the second century with the phrase: “God became man so that man might become God.” Our Lord took unto himself what was not His original nature to clearly show us that it is possible for us to forsake our sinful nature. He opened the heavens and descended to us, teaching us to open the gates of our hearts and forgiveness of sins, offering mercy to our brethren through the likeness of His love toward us.

My prayer for you in these blessed days is that may you always be prepared to receive the birth of Christ within you, to be a warm manger for Him, and to be blessed by His constant presence within you. May He increasingly mold you into His likeness day by day.

May God bless your days and your lives, and may everyone taste the peace of His Nativity.

Wishing you a blessed festal season and a new year filled with His blessings, I remain,

Yours in the Incarnate Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "T. Saba". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+SABA

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you!

We sincerely thank all of our contributors to our Christmas toy collection this year. There were 80 toys that were provided to help make the children of Elizabeth House in Pasadena much happier this Christmas. We especially thank, Brittney Ajalat for her help as coordinator.

We also thank everyone who contributed to this year's Teen SOYO Holiday Raffle that ended. The drawing took place on Sunday, December 10, at the end of our Church School Christmas Program; the proceeds of which will contribute towards our teen programs and The Special Olympics Sports Camp. The winners were: 1st Place, Cecelia Coudsy; 2nd Place, Margaret Soffa; 3rd Place, Steven Murray. Congratulations!

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley

16643 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, California 91406-4622

Metropolitan SABA, Archbishop of New York and all North America

V. Rev. Timothy Baclig, Pastor
frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org

Church Telephone: 818/994-2313
www.stmichaelvannuys.org

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things,
at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

(II Corinthians 9:8)

Dear Members of St. Michael,

In approaching the end of this calendar year our Parish Council is preparing to provide us with our 2024 Annual Budget. A parish cannot solely rely upon the income of Sacramental offerings because we would not be able to meet our month-to-month expenses based upon anticipating baptisms, weddings, or funerals that takes place each year. Nor can we adequately pay for our ongoing property maintenance without the shared responsibility and the help of volunteers of our membership. Our parish is able to provide its clergy and facilities, the prayer services of the church and its Sacraments because of our faithful parishioners who help to financially support the salaries and the operational costs of our church property.

We are again asking everyone to prayerfully consider making a reasonable annual financial pledge to the General Fund our parish for the New Year. We look forward, by God's grace, for continued growth in the future. We are also very grateful for the fulfilled commitments of all who have provided us with contributions to complete the construction of our new church sanctuary. Additional information will be provided at our Annual Parish Meeting to all pledging and regular contributing members at the end of January.

May you and your family enjoy God's continued blessings as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of our Lord's birth.

In Christ,

Subdeacon Richard Tamoush

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 insurances. Moreover, it is not uncommon for these regular 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 as a regular contributor of the parish. The Pastor's living expenses and allowances are included the Annual Budget of the parish that will be presented at our Annual Meeting on January 28th.

Our 2024 Pledge Form is provided with this bulletin and available on our parish website.

The form may be completed and returned to the Church Office at: 16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys; California; 91406; or placed in the narthex offering box. Thank you for your continued support of our parish.

St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church
16643 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406 Phone: 818-994-2313
Website: www.stmichaelvannuys.org

2024 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FORM

- 1. All enrolled members must first fulfill a fair share contribution that is paid 100% by St. Michael Church to the Archdiocese annually (this does not include your family pledge obligation BELOW).**

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 18 & above) in your household _____ \$50 each _____

Total number of baptized Orthodox persons (age 17 & under) in your household _____ \$35 each _____

(Please print all names with information in the section below)

- 2. In gratitude of God's blessings, I / we pledge to contribute St. Michael Church expenses.**

A total annual amount of: _____ (see Treasure self-assessment chart)

\$_____ weekly \$_____ monthly \$_____ quarterly \$_____ semi-annually \$_____ annually

Name _____ Spouse Name _____

Phone number _____ E-mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- 3. How do you wish to pay? We accept personal checks or credit card payments. (See below)**

- a. You may write a check to "St. Michael Church" and mail it to the Church Office.
(see address above)
- b. You may process an "automatic bill pay" with your bank that will mail a recurring monthly hard-copy earmarked check to St. Michael Church.
- c. You may pay by credit card using our website donation page (a 3% processing fee will apply) at: <https://www.stmichaelvannuys.org/donate/> and we will be immediately notified.
- d. You may arrange for a recurring monthly automatic withdrawal from your bank account using our church bank routing number and bank account.

Note: Each donation to St. Michael Church should be earmarked, i.e., "Building Fund," "Pledge," etc.

Print names of baptized Orthodox persons in your household.

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age

Name Age

Church Offering Options

Your church offering may be made on-line via our website "Donation" tab or by mailing your check to the church at: 16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys, California; 91406. Mailing your check to the church will save our church a 3% service charge. Other options for your contributions include: a) automatic bill pay; b) recurring automatic withdrawal, both of which may be arranged with your bank. You may contact us for assistance with any of these options; especially when information of our bank routing and account numbers are needed.

Building Funds Capital Funds Campaign

As we nearing the end of 2023, we should begin thinking of our tax benefits when filing our Tax Return for this year. One of the few benefits the IRS has left us is Charitable Contributions. We ask that you prayerfully consider donating to the St. Michael Church Building Fund. There is still much to complete in our new Temple and additional Sponsorships available. There are many ways to donate which include a direct donation, donating stocks or securities or matching donations to name just a few. Please contact Ron Zraick, the committee chairman at ronaldzraick@gmail.com with any questions you may have.

Sanctuary Chairs Available for Sponsorships

Sponsorships of the solid oak upholstered seats are available: \$300/chair, or \$3,000 for a "gang-tied" row of ten that form a pew. Each seat includes a book pocket (front and back) beneath the seat, and a vinyl kneeler. Twelve custom high chairs are also available for choir sponsorship seating (\$350).



Parish Christmas Card

Our 2023 Parish Christmas card was mailed to everyone on our mailing list. 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 Project is a service that helps to St. Michael to receive donations from parishioners and friends of our community who are listed on the card. The order those listed 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.

December is “St. Ignatius Month” in the Antiochian Archdiocese Learn more about The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch with the attachment provided with this bulletin (below)

Reading the epistle this morning is: Charles Ajalat

Upcoming Events

[Note: You may now access our Google Parish Calendar to your personal calendar.

Simply go to: <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/1?cid=YWRtaW5Ac3RtaWN0YWVsdmFubnV5cy5vcmcj>

A conversation with Michael Baclig, President of the Antiochian Men of the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast; Saturday, December 23rd, 3 p.m. (before Vespers)

Sixth Installation of Iconography (The altar *Platytera*)
December 27 to January 4

Young Adult Winter Retreat, January 12-15, 2024
“Building Relationships Through Christ”

Speaker: Rev. Fr. George & Khouriye Miray Katrib

Registration: <https://submit.jotform.com/232980702097157>

Annual Meeting of the Voting Membership, Sunday January 28, 2024

Our Weekly Bible Study Will Resume in January 2024

Our study of the Book of Genesis will resume on Tuesday, January 9, 2024. Recorded links of our study are available upon request.

Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Report Booklet

The Annual Meeting of the Voting Membership will be held on Sunday, January 28, 2024. In the best interest of time, a Report Booklet will be prepared for distribution prior to the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 22. All Council officers, Standing Committees and Subsidiary Organizations should turn in their single page reports to the Church Office no later than Sunday, January 7, 2024 in order to be compile on time for distribution to the Voting Membership.

Establishing a Prayer Discipline

Have you ever found praying to be difficult? Do you feel too busy to pray? Or perhaps you don't know where to begin? Maybe you have found it hard to focus, or even experienced emptiness when you pray. If so, you're not alone. For many Orthodox Christians, prayer can be misunderstood, or even frustrating. But prayer is how we build an intimate relationship with the living God! The reality is that cultivating that relationship takes time and effort. Our parish is partnering with Faithtree Resources in *The Encounter*, a prayer initiative that will help us grow closer to God, closer to each other, and to grow in our faith.

The Encounter is made up of daily Orthodox prayers that you can utilize on a free app, or through a physical prayer book. *The Encounter* is a simple and easy way to begin to grow in your prayer life and do so with others in our community.

If you'd like more information about participating, sign up on the google doc here: tinyurl.com/encounterfaithtree



**The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch
Los Angeles Area Fellowship Dinner**

with

**Roger David
North American Chair**

**Sunday, January 21, 2024
5:30 p.m. Social (no host bar)
6:30 p.m. Dinner**

Phoenicia Restaurant

343 N. Central Ave.
Glendale 91203
(818) 956-7800

\$75 per person

**Please join us for dinner and an evening of fellowship with
current and prospective members of The Order.**

- Roger David will update us on the good works of The Order.
- Irene Basdakis, Director of FOCUS Southern California, will share a short presentation on the rewarding activities of FOCUS in our area.
- One of our founding members will be honored in a special tribute.
- Bring a family member or friend to learn more about our beloved organization!
- Valet parking is available (\$15 fee).

Name: _____ No. Attending: ____ Total (@ \$75 ea): \$ _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make your check payable to *Order of St. Ignatius* and mail to:

Concetta Smarius
3750 Newhaven Road
Pasadena, CA 91107
(213) 700-0229

concettasmarius@yahoo.com

PASTORAL SERMON
The Sunday Before the Nativity
By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig
December 24, 2023

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 human 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 or made a mistake.

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, except for sin. However, as the "new Adam" (see**

Romans 5:12-18), Christ was perfect Man by voluntarily choosing obedience to the will of God the Father. 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 also 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.

**THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST (THE GENEALOGY),
VENERABLE MARTYR EUGENIA OF ROME AND THOSE WITH HER**

أبوليتيكيون القيامة باللحن الرابع

إِنَّ تَلْمِذَاتِ الرَّبِّ تَعَلَّمْنَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ الْكَرُزَ بِالْقِيَامَةِ الْبَهْجِ، وَطَرَحْنَ الْقَضَاءَ الْجَدِّيَّ، وَخَاطَبْنَ الرَّسُلَ مُفْتَخِرَاتٍ وَقَائِلَاتٍ: سُبِّي الْمَوْتُ وَقَامَ الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهُ، وَمَنَحَ الْعَالَمَ الرَّحْمَةَ الْعُظْمَى.

طروبارية الأحد الذي قبل الميلاد على اللحن الثاني

عظيمة هي مفاعيل الإيمان، فبه ابتهج الثلاثة الفتية القديسون في ينبوع اللهب كأنهم على ماء الراحة. ودانيال النبي ظهر راعياً للأسود كأنها غنم. فبتضرعاتهم، أيها المسيح الإله، خلص نفوسنا.

طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع

أيها المتقدمون على الأجناد السماويين، نتوسل إليكم نحن غير المستحقين، حتى أنكم بطلبكم تكتنوفوننا بظلاً أجنحة مجدكم غير الهولي، حافظين إيانا نحن الجاثين والصارخين بغير فتور، أنقذونا من الشدائد، بما أنكم رؤساء مراتب القوات العلوية.

قنداق مقدمة 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 آباننا، 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

المواعِدَ وسَدُّوا أَفْوَاةَ الأَسودِ. وأخمدوا لهيبَ النارِ ونجوا من حدِّ السيفِ، وتغلبوا على الضعفِ وصاروا أبطالاً في الحروبِ وكسروا جيوشَ الغرباءِ واسترجعت نساءً أمواتهنَّ بالقيامةِ. وعُدبَ آخرونَ بالضربِ ورفضوا النجاةَ في سبيلِ القيامةِ إلى حياةٍ أفضلٍ، وقاسى آخرونَ الهزءَ والجلدَ، والقيودَ أيضاً والسجنَ. ورُجموا ونُشروا وقُتلوا بحدِّ السيفِ وهاموا على وجوههم لابسين جلودَ الغنمِ والماعزِ محرومين مضايقين مظلومين، لا يستحقهم العالمُ، فتاهوا في البراري والجبالي والمغاورِ وكهوفِ الأرضِ. فلم يحصلْ هؤلاءُ على الوعدِ، مع أنَّهم مشهودٌ لهم بالإيمانِ، لأنَّ اللهَ سبق فأعدَّ لنا مصيراً أفضلَ من مصيرهم وشاءَ أن لا يصيروا كاملين بدوننا.

الإنجيل

فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارَةِ القديسِ متى

سجّلُ انتسابِ يسوعَ المسيحِ ابنِ داودِ ابنِ إبراهيمَ: إبراهيمُ ولدَ اسحقَ. واسحقُ ولدَ يعقوبَ. ويعقوبُ ولدَ يهوذاَ واخوته. ويهوذاَ ولدَ فارصَ وزارحَ من ثامارَ. وفارصَ ولدَ حصرونَ. وحصرونَ ولدَ أرامَ. وأرامَ ولدَ عمينادابَ. وعمينادابَ ولدَ نحشونَ. ونحشونَ ولدَ سلمونَ. وسلمونَ ولدَ بوعزَ من راحابَ. وبوعزَ ولدَ عوبيدَ من راعوثَ. وعوبيدَ ولدَ يسيَ. ويسيَ ولدَ داودَ الملكَ. وداودَ ولدَ سليمانَ من أرملةِ أوريا. وسليمانَ ولدَ رحبعامَ. ورحبعامَ ولدَ أبيا. وأبيا ولدَ آسا. وآسا ولدَ يهوشافاطَ. ويهوشافاطَ ولدَ يورامَ. ويورامَ ولدَ عزيا. وعزيا ولدَ يوثامَ. ويوثامَ ولدَ أحازَ. وأحازَ ولدَ حزقيا. وحزقيا ولدَ منسى. ومنسى ولدَ آمونَ. وآمونَ ولدَ يوشيا. ويوشيا ولدَ يكنيا وإخوته زمن السبي إلى بابل. وبعد السبي إلى بابل يكنيا ولدَ شألتيل. وشألتيل ولدَ زربابل. وزربابل ولدَ أبيهودَ. وأبيهودَ ولدَ ألياقيمَ. وألياقيمَ ولدَ عازورَ. وعازورَ ولدَ صادقَ. وسادوقَ ولدَ أخيمَ. وأخيمَ ولدَ أليودَ. وأليودَ ولدَ أليعازرَ. وأليعازرَ ولدَ متانَ. ومتانَ ولدَ يعقوبَ. ويعقوبَ ولدَ يوسفَ رجلَ مريمَ التي ولدَ منها يسوعَ الذي يدعى المسيحَ. فمجموعُ الأجيالِ من إبراهيمَ إلى داودَ أربعةَ عشرَ جيلاً، ومن داودَ إلى سبي بابلَ أربعةَ عشرَ جيلاً. أما ميلادُ يسوعَ فهكذا كان: لما كانت أمه مريمَ مخطوبةً ليوسفَ، 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 بامرأتك 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 ابناً 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، الا 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 فى الخبز المقدس الذى يوزع عند إنتهاء مراسيم القداس). رجاء مراجعة الكاهن. إذا رغبت أن تصبح عضواً فى الكنيسة الارثوذكسية.