

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD



It was God's angelic messenger, Gabriel, that announced to the Holy Virgin the awesome news of the Saviour's upcoming birth. At that time, he also proclaimed the name of this Child. He said, "Behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call His name JESUS." His name means "Saviour."

Saints Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church Bulletin

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HOLY MYSTERIES

VISITATIONS OF THE SICK AND INFIRM – If you are going into the hospital for any reason, please inform Father Stephen at the Rectory. Our hospitalization code for Christiana and Wilmington Hospitals is **UKR**.

EMERGENCY CALLS – Please call the Rectory anytime (day or night) in an Emergency!

BAPTISMS – Celebrated by appointment.

CROWNING IN MARRIAGE – Please discuss timing with Father prior to setting a date. At least six months notice is needed. There are three 2-hour courses that must be attended prior to the Wedding.

BULLETIN DEADLINE – The deadline for getting information printed in the Weekly Bulletin is Wednesday.

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS – For the Needs of the Parish; 2nd Youth Ministry

January 4, 2026
Volume 62: Number 01
Schedule of Services and Activities
Week of January 4 - 11, 2026

Sunday, January 4 – Sunday before the Nativity – Holy Fathers - Tone 5

8:30 AM – Confessions

9:10 AM – Prayers Preparation for Holy Communion

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful

Coffee Hour – Lenten Soup Sale



Tuesday, January 6 – Nativity Eve

7:00 AM – Royal Hours

8:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

1:00 PM – Divine Liturgy for Nativity (Holy Trinity – Whaleyville, MD)

6:00 PM – Holy Supper

7:00 PM – Confessions

8:00 PM – Great Complines

Wednesday, January 7 – Nativity in the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ

9:15 AM - Caroling

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful

Special Coffee Hour

Thursday, January 8 - Synaxis of the Mother of God

8:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

Friday, January 9 – Feast of St. Stephen

7:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

Sunday, January 11 – Sunday after the Nativity - Tone 6

8:30 AM – Confessions

9:10 AM – Prayers Preparation for Holy Communion

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful

Coffee Hour – Lenten Soup Sale

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sunday before the Nativity – Holy Fathers – Matins: Luke 24:36-53; **Liturgy:** Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40; Matthew 1:1-25

Monday – Ephesians 6:10-17; Luke 21:12-19

Tuesday - Nativity Eve - Royal Hours: Psalms 5,44,45-66, 86, 50-71. 131, 90-110, 85

1st Hour: Micah 5:2-4; Hebrews 1:1-12; Matthew 1:18-25

3rd Hour: Jeremiah 3:36-4:4; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 2:1-20

6th Hour: Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4, 8-10; Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3; Matthew 2:1-12

9th Hour: Isaiah 9:6-7; Hebrews 2:11-18; Matthew 2:13-23

Vespers: 1) Genesis 1:1-13; 2) Numbers 24:2-9; 17-18; 3) Micah 4:6-7; 5:2-4; 4) Isaiah 11:1-10; 5) Baruch 3:36-38; 4:1-4; 6) Daniel 2:31-36; 44-45; 7) Isaiah 9:6-7; 8) Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4; 8-10 – **Liturgy of Saint Basil:** Hebrews 1:1-12; Luke 2:1-20

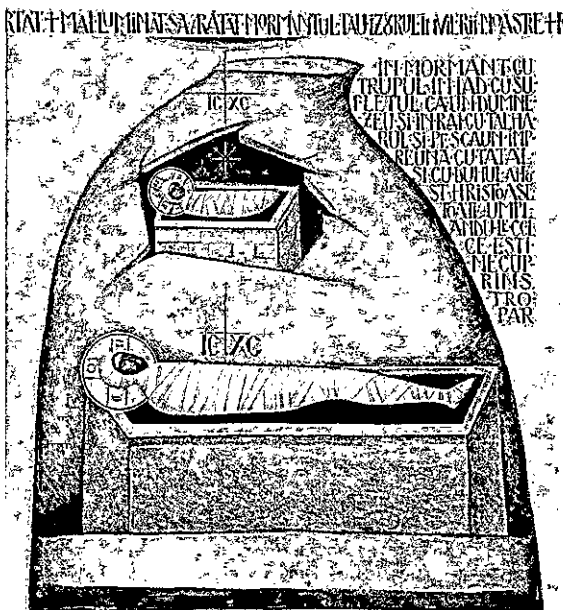
Wednesday - Nativity of Our Lord: **Matins:** Matthew. 1:18-25; **Liturgy:** Galatians 4:4-7; Matthew. 2:1-12

Thursday - Synaxis of the Mother of God: Hebrews 2:11-18; Matthew 2:13-23

Friday – Feast of St. Stephen – Matins: Mark 12:1-12; **Liturgy:** Acts of the Apostles 6:8-15, 7:1-5, 47-60; Matthew 21:33-42;

Saturday after Nativity – 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Matthew 12:15-21

31 Sunday – Sunday after Nativity – Matins: John 20:19-31; **Liturgy:** Galatians 1:11-19; Matthew 2:13-23



DID YOU KNOW – that our celebration of the Birth of Christ is the foreshadowing of His Death and Burial? Both occur in a Cave. The swaddling clothes remind us of the Burial Shroud. Did you realize that the chopping down of the Christmas Tree represents the Death of Christ and the putting it up and decorating it is a symbol of the Resurrection. Did you realize that the Wreathes that we hang are never ending circles which represent eternity. Did you know that the candy cane represents the Good Shepherd (Christ Himself) and the staff of the shepherds who visit His birth. Did you know that the gifts that we give and receive are representations of the three gifts of the

Magi. Did you know that on that beautiful day we have received the “Perfect Gift”, Christ Himself, Who was given to us to remove all of our sins.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

We would like to express our wishes for a most blessed and joyous Nativity to His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew, to His Eminence, Metropolitan Antony, to His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel, to Father Charles and Pani Dobrodyka Melania Sanderson and their family, to Protodeacon Ihor and Pani Dobrodyka Irene Mahlay and their family, to all the members of the Clergy, to the members of the Consistory, to all of our Seminarians, to all of our Parish Organizations: our Church Choir; our Altar Boys; our Church School; our Parish Sisterhood; our Parish UOL; our Parish Boy Scout Troop #70 "The Peacemakers"; to all of the faithful Parishioners of Saints Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church and to their families, to all Orthodox faithful celebrating this great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord today and to all men, women and children of good will for

Christ is Born!

Let us Glorify Him!

Father Stephen Hutnick

The Parish Board



CHRISTMAS EVE TRADITIONS

Christmas Eve, among Ukrainians as among most Slavic peoples, is a very special day since it is the time of immediate anticipation of the Birth of the Savior of the World.



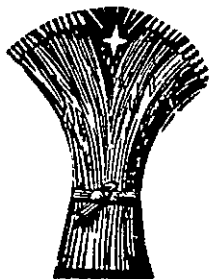
Bodies and souls both tingle in expectant joy at the hope of the Bethlehem Birth of Christ. Our people observe the day with particularly beautiful traditions and customs - traditions and customs which bring the "religious" celebration into the home and make it real. All are encouraged to make Nativity Eve a very special time in order to come to a fuller and deeper understanding of the Mystery that is celebrated. All are encouraged to put **CHRIST** back into Christmas - to stress again the meaning of this **HOLY DAY**, which has been transformed into a holiday. Christmas should mean much more than just tree trimming and gift giving. It should be a time when we truly **CELEBRATE** the

fact that **GOD IS WITH US.**

Traditionally, Christmas Eve is strictly for the family. The whole day is centered around Church, the home and then again to Church. Christmas Eve is a very holy day in which the family **FASTS** until the first star appears in the sky. All are encouraged to observe Christmas Eve as a real **FAST** and **ABSTINENCE** day. If you do I can assure you that your joy will be heightened.

Of primary importance to the celebration of this Holy Evening, Christmas Eve, is the **HOLY SUPPER**, the meatless dinner of twelve dishes served and prepared with great solemnity and care. The Holy Supper is one in which each food, each activity and all decorations are symbolic. The order and the nature of the twelve foods vary from region to region because of differences of availability and geographical custom. Twelve "**MEATLESS**" dishes seem to be what is symbolically important. They represent the twelve Apostles.

By Tradition the Holy Supper can begin only after sunset - at the sighting of the **FIRST STAR**. The table is set with a white tablecloth since it symbolizes the "**SWADDLING CLOTHES**" and the "**PURITY**" of the Christ Child's Mother. Further, some hay or straw is placed under the tablecloth to remind us of the Bethlehem manger. A three-tiered "**kolach**" or braided bread, representing the Trinity is placed in the center of the table. A white, beeswax candle, a reminder of the star that shone over the stable in Bethlehem, is placed in the center of the bread.



A "DYDUKH" (sheaf of wheat tied into a bundle) reminds us of the Mother Earth and the sustenance she has given us. In some homes the dydukh is decorated with flowers, ribbon, basil and an embroidered cloth (Rushnyk). In some homes the candlelight from the kolach and from the tree are the only lights allowed until supper is ended.

An **EXTRA** place is set for the departed ancestors, those family members spending their holidays away from home, the wanderers, the hungry, the homeless and the deceased. (Some homes try to invite someone who doesn't have family close by to share the meal). The "household" animals also traditionally share in the meal since animals were present when Christ was born (some people even believe that animals use human language on Christmas Eve).



The **HOLY SUPPER** must begin with a prayer and the traditional Nativity greeting: Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Before sitting down to supper, the head of the household, in some traditions, greets each member of the family with **KUTIA**, which is made of wheat cooked with honey and poppy seed. It is one of the season's "ritual foods" signifying unity

with God and our ancestors.

The other dishes then follow and may be something akin to this listing: **PICKLED HERRING** or **BAKED FISH** (some make studanyna out of fish); **BORSCHT** (beet soup); **VARENYKY** OR **PYROHY**; **HOLUBTSI** (buckwheat or rice); **MUSHROOMS AND SAUCE**; **SAUERKRAUT** with **BEANS** or **PEAS**; **BUCKWHEAT KASHA**; **NALYSNYKY** or **FILLED CREPES**; **FRUIT**; **HONEYCAKE** OR **DOUGHNUTS** (Pompushky); **BREAD**.

TRADITIONALLY Nativity Eve was a day of strict fast and abstinence. Our Church has softened the fast for those who cannot fast all day to abstinence from meat and dairy products. It is the fasting of the day that makes the Holy Supper so special. Each one of us as families can make this "**meal**" special in some manner. The food should be simple. Let's make this Nativity Eve one that will be special in our lives. Share a common meal. Make special food. Fast. Pray together in thanksgiving because truly, **GOD IS WITH US!**

Sun. Before the Nativity of Our Lord

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah – Matthew 1:1-17 Luke 3:23-38

The genealogy at the beginning of the Gospel establishes Jesus' place within the Jewish tradition. Jesus is the son of Abraham and of David as well as the continuation of David's line after the exile of 587 B.C. The names in the genealogy up to Abiud in verse 13 are found in the Old Testament, and here they are arranged in three sets of fourteen names each (v. 17). Israel's history is traced from its beginning with Abraham (v. 2), through its high point with King David (v. 6) and its low point in the Babylonian exile (v. 11), to its fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah (v. 17). Luke emphasizes Jesus' universal significance by tracing his lineage back from Joseph to Adam (see Luke 3:23-38), but Matthew is concerned with rooting Jesus of Nazareth in the heritage of God's chosen people, Israel.

The literary flow of the genealogy is disturbed by the inclusion of the names of four women. Not only is the occurrence of women's names in a Jewish genealogy unusual, but what is known about them from the Old Testament makes their appearance all the more surprising. Tamar (v. 3) disguised herself as a prostitute and conceived her sons by Judah, her father-in-law (see Genesis 38). Rahab (v. 5) was a prostitute of Jericho whose life was spared on account of her collaboration with Joshua's spies (see Joshua 2; 6). The tradition that she was the mother of Boaz is found only in Matthew's Gospel. Ruth (v. 5) was a Moabite who joined herself to Israel through her husband's family (see Ruth). The "wife of Uriah" (v. 6) was Bathsheba; King David shamefully arranged her husband's death in battle and took her as a wife (2 Samuel 11).

The appearance of these four unusual women in the genealogy of the Messiah prepares for the surprising birth of Jesus in verses 18-25. Just as their inclusion breaks the genealogical pattern of "A was the father of B" and just as what is known about them from the Scriptures indicates some kind of irregularity, so the birth of Jesus breaks the traditional pattern (v. 16) and is highly irregular. Thus, the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17 goes in two directions: It stresses the continuity of Jesus with the great figures of God's people ("son of Abraham . . . son of David"), and it also prepares for the very irregular and indeed unique birth narrated in the following passage.

1:18-25 The birth of Jesus (see Luke 2:1-7). The story of Jesus' birth is really an extension of the genealogy. Its primary concern is Jesus' right to a place in the messianic genealogy through Joseph, and its climax comes in Joseph's resolve to make Jesus a Davidic child by assuming the legal obligations of paternity. The tension between continuity with the Jewish tradition (legal paternity through Joseph) and the sharp break with tradition (the miraculous conception of Jesus) develops the basic theme already raised in the genealogy.

Engagement or betrothal in Jewish society of Jesus' time involved a much stronger commitment than it does in modern Western society. The description of Joseph's embarrassment and his plans in verses 18-19 may presume his suspicion that Mary had been raped or seduced. As a devout observer of the Old Testament law, Joseph could not take Mary as his wife (see Deuteronomy 22:23-27). Not wishing to subject Mary to the shameful trial of the woman suspected of adultery (Numbers 5:11-31), he decided to forgo the public procedure and took upon himself the responsibility for the divorce. Divorce proceedings were carried out, not in a law court, but rather on the initiative of the male (see Deuteronomy 24:1).

Joseph's plans are interrupted in verses 20-23 by the appearance of a messenger from God in a dream - a device familiar from the Old Testament account of the birth of Samson (Judg 13). The angel's message assumes the virginal conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit and concentrates on the names of the Messiah. As the legal son of Joseph, Jesus will be named the "Son of David" (v. 20). His given name is Jesus, which is related to the Hebrew verb for "save." This name is entirely appropriate because, in Matthew's perspective and in the faith of all the early Christians, Jesus saved the people of God from their sins. The third name applied to Jesus appears in the citation from Isaiah 7:14: "and they shall call him Emmanuel." As a sign to King Ahaz and his royal court, the prophet Isaiah had announced that a certain woman would bear a son. The early Christians took the Greek translation of "young woman" as "virgin" to confirm their belief in the virginal conception of Jesus. But Matthew may have been more interested in the child's name "Emmanuel." In Hebrew, "Emmanuel" means "God with us," and this expresses the significance of Jesus for Matthew and the early church. A similar note is struck in the final verse of the Gospel: "And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (28:20). The dream allayed Joseph's fears. Not only had Mary not been raped or seduced, but this child has been conceived by the Holy Spirit and deserves the names Son of David, Jesus, and Emmanuel. Joseph acts in accordance with the divine communication and takes Mary to be his wife (v. 24). The statement in verse 25 that he did not have sexual relations with her before the birth of Jesus neither affirms nor denies the perpetual virginity of Mary.

The whole of Matthew 1:1-25 serves both to situate Jesus firmly within God's people and to call attention to his extraordinary status. On the one hand, he is the descendant of Abraham and David and the fulfillment of the promises and hopes attached to those great Old Testament figures. On the other hand, the mode of his birth is highly unusual, and the names given to him-Jesus and Emmanuel-suggest that, he far surpasses any of his ancestors.

ARCHPASTORAL CHRISTMAS LETTER
*of the Council of Bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church
of the USA and Diaspora*



Beloved Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful Children
in the Lord: Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

In the stillness of the holy night of Bethlehem, heaven bent toward the earth, and the Infinite became an Infant. The Creator of the universe took on flesh and was laid not in a palace, but in a humble manger. The One whom all the angels adore came to us clothed not in majesty, but in meekness. This is the great wonder of Christmas: God becomes man so that humanity may become radiant with God.

In a world intoxicated by noise, power, and pride, the Nativity proclaims a truth that overturns every human expectation: The Almighty enters history not with armies, but with the cry of a newborn Child! The King of Glory comes not to be served, but to serve! The Lord of Hosts conquers not by the sword, but by sacrificial love.

The cave of Bethlehem becomes the throne of humility. The manger becomes the altar of hope. The light of the Star becomes the path that leads the searching heart to God.

This year, the message of Christmas is especially urgent. Across the world - and most painfully in Ukraine - darkness seeks to choke the human spirit. War, violence, injustice, and fear tear at the fabric of daily life. Families are separated. Homes destroyed. Children endure trauma and terror. Innocent lives are lost.

Yet on this day, the Church proclaims the eternal Gospel: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5)

Christ comes precisely into such places - into the brokenness of human history, into the wounded corners of the human heart. He is Emmanuel, God with us - not far, not distant, not indifferent, but present in every tear, every prayer, every struggle, and every act of mercy.

Beloved, Christmas is not merely a feast we remember - it is a mystery we live. Every act of compassion becomes a Bethlehem. Every word of forgiveness becomes a star over the manger. Every gift to the poor becomes gold, frankincense, and myrrh offered to Christ.

Our parishes, clergy, faithful, youth, and children have responded with extraordinary generosity during these years of hardship: supporting orphanages and hospitals, feeding the hungry, assisting refugees, comforting soldiers, and sustaining the wounded people of Ukraine through compassionate action.

As your archpastors, we behold in your kindness the living continuation of the miracle of Bethlehem.

For truly, as St. John Chrysostom teaches: "If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will not find Him in the chalice."

And as St. Basil the Great reminds us: "The bread you store belongs to the hungry; the cloak in your closet belongs to the naked."

The way of Christ is the way of humility. He calls us to descend, not to rise; to serve, not to be served; to bring peace, not division; to bear one another's burdens, not to ignore them.

Let us remember that the true Christmas gift is the offering of ourselves in love. For the Child born in Bethlehem will one day stretch His arms upon the Cross - and His manger and Cross together reveal the full measure of God's infinite love.

To our beloved clergy: May the Christ Child renew your strength, deepen your compassion, and fill your ministry with the joy of His presence.

To our faithful families: May your homes be warmed by the peace of the newborn Messiah and strengthened by prayer, unity, and love.

To those who are suffering, lonely, or grieving: The Child of Bethlehem enters your sorrow with tenderness. You are not forgotten. God is with you.

To the defenders of Ukraine, the wounded, the displaced, and the grieving: We lift you before Christ, the Prince of Peace, with love, respect, and unceasing prayer.

To the children - the joy of the Church: May the Star of Bethlehem shine upon your hearts, guiding you always toward Christ.

Beloved in Christ, let the Holy Nativity fill your hearts with awe, your homes with peace, and your lives with the light that no darkness can overcome.

May the humility of Bethlehem inspire you. May the peace of the angels strengthen you. May the love of Christ transform you.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

With Archpastoral Blessings and Love in the Newborn Savior,

† Antony

Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora

† Jeremiah

Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of South America

† Daniel

Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Western Europe



CHRIST IS BORN TO US

+ B A R T H O L O M E W

By God's Mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch to
All the Plenitude of the Church

Grace, Mercy and Peace from the Savior Christ Born in Bethlehem

Most honorable Brother Hierarchs, Beloved children in the Lord,

Having once again been found worthy of reaching t
he great feast of the Nativity in the flesh of the Son and Word of God, we glorify the
"inexpressible and incomprehensible condescension" of the Savior of the human race and
Redeemer of all creation from corruption, even as we proclaim with the angels "Glory to
God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all people." [1]

Christ was revealed as "Emmanuel," [2] as "God with us" and "for us", as God beside each
of us and "closer to us than ourselves." [3] The pre-eternal Word of God, who is
"consubstantial with the Father," as formulated in doctrine by the First Ecumenical
Council, whose 1700th anniversary was appropriately celebrated by the Christian world
over this year, "becomes like His own creature," being incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the
Virgin Mary "in order to render human beings into gods."

The Apolytikion (Dismissal Hymn) for Christmas declares that the Nativity of Christ "has
shone to the world the Light of knowledge" and revealed "the transcendent and universal
meaning" of life and history, namely the truth that only the Christian faith can fully satisfy
the deeper pursuit of the mind and thirst of the heart, that "salvation is found in no one
else" [4] but Christ. Thenceforth, the "knowledge" that "puffs up" [5] is being judged by
the words of the Lord, that "You will come to know the truth, and the truth shall set you
free." [6]

The suprarational event of the Incarnation is experienced and repeated spiritually in the
life of the faithful, who love the epiphany of the Savior Christ. As St. Maximus the
Confessor writes: "The Word of God was once born in the flesh, but desires always to be
born in the spirit out of love for those who desire it." [7] In this sense, the Feast of the
Nativity, of the divine Incarnation and the deification of humankind by grace, does not
direct us to an event of the past, but guides us to the "future city," [8] to the heavenly
kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In a world, where the echo of war and noise of weapons prevail, the angelic "peace in the
world" is resounded and the Lord's voice blesses "the peacemakers" while His Holy
Church prays during the Divine Liturgy "for the peace from above" and "for the peace of

the whole world.” Genuine faith in the living God strengthens our struggle for peace and righteousness, even when we are faced with humanly insurmountable impediments. As the Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church—whose tenth anniversary we shall celebrate next year—inspiringly states: “the oil of religious experience must be used to heal wounds and not to rekindle the fire of military conflicts.”[9]

The Góspel of peace especially concerns us Christians. We consider it impermissible to remain indifferent before the fragmentation of Christendom, particularly when this attitude is accompanied by fundamentalism and explicit rejection of inter-Christian dialogue that ultimately aims at transcending division and achieving unity. The obligation of striving for Christian unity is non-negotiable. The responsibility to continue the efforts of the pioneers of the Ecumenical Movement along with the justification of their vision and labor rest on the younger generation of Christians.

We belong to Christ, who is “our peace”[10] and “the fulfilment of joy” in our life, the “goodwill” that springs from the conviction that “the truth has arrived” and “the shadow has passed,” that love is stronger than hatred and life stronger than death, that evil does not have the final word in the life of the world, which is directed by Christ, who is “the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.”[11] This faith must shine and be revealed in the way we honor Christmas and the other feasts of the Church. The joyous celebration of the faithful should bear witness to the transformative power of our faith in Christ. It should be a time of goodwill and spiritual delight, the experience of that ineffable “great joy”[12] that is “synonymous with the Gospel.”

Most honorable Brothers and beloved children,

In 2026, the Holy Great Church of Christ will honor the completion of 1400 years since August 7, 626, when the Akathist Hymn was chanted “upstanding” during the Sacred Vigil in the Church of Panagia Vlachernae, as an expression of gratitude to the All-Holy Mother of God, for the safeguarding of the City of Constantinople from the attack of hostile forces. On the occasion of this historic milestone, the 2026 Yearbook of the Ecumenical Patriarchate will be dedicated to the commemoration of this important event for our tradition and identity, which are inseparably and profoundly associated with the honor reserved for our ever-blessed and most pure Mother of God, the defender and protector of our people.

In this spirit, as we bow before Mary who holds the infant Jesus in her arms, and as we worship the Divine Word who assumed our form, we wish upon all of you a blessed Holy Twelvetide, and a fruitful in good deeds and filled with divine gifts new year of the Lord’s

favor, to Whom belong all glory, honor and worship, now and always, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Christmas 2025

+Bartholomew of Constantinople
Your fervent supplicant of all before God

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- [1] Lk 2.14.
- [2] Mt. 1.23.
- [3] Nicholas Cabasilas, On the Life in Christ, VI, PG 150. 660.
- [4] Acts 4.12.
- [5] Cf. 1 Cor. 8.1.
- [6] Jn 8.32.
- [7] Various Texts on Theology and the Divine Economy X, 8, PG 90.1181.
- [8] Heb. 13.14.
- [9] Paragraph 4.
- [10] Eph. 2.14.
- [11] Heb. 13.8.
- [12] Cf. Lk 2.10.

CATCHING THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

The birth of Christ has always been related to His Second Coming on the last day. "We do not preach only one coming of Christ, but a second as well, much more glorious than the first," writes St. Cyril of Jerusalem. "The first coming was marked by patience; the second will bring the crown of a divine Kingdom. . . There is a hidden coming, like that of rain on fleece, and a coming before all eyes, still in the future."

HOW we receive Christ now, as the Savior of the world, will determine how He receives us. "Just as in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all," Christ says, adding that "it will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17: 26-27; 30).

The "holiday spirit" we struggle so feverishly to capture - the spirit of fellowship and love and human warmth - is meant to express, not overshadow, our recognition of God's loving presence in our lives.

THE NATIVITY - The Feast of Re-Creation

Christ's coming among us is an historical event graciously willed by the Father as our path to re-birth, the transfiguration of all mankind and the entire world of created things. In the Nativity, the Eastern Church celebrates the renewal, sanctification and re-creation of the whole universe. In a Christmas hymn of the Divine Liturgy the Church sings: "The Virgin today brings forth the transubstantial and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable. Angels give glory with the shepherds and the wise men journey with the star; because for our sake is born as a little Child, God the Eternal."

In the Nativity Icon we see two fundamental aspects of the great mystery: First, the historical reality of the event in the world of time showing in its details the humanity of God with us; secondly, the consequences of this event in our created world reconciling all things in heaven and on earth in Christ.

All of creation waits for the full redemption of the children of God, the participation in the glorious freedom these children are called to possess. The call that man holds to participate in the redemption of creation summons him with urgency to be renewed by the love of God made manifest in Christ Jesus. Creation has as its final purpose, as does man, ultimate transfiguration.

In this Icon of the Nativity we see all creation taking part in this event, with representatives rendering each his own fitting homage and thanks: "What shall we bring to You, O Christ, when You are born on earth as man for our sake? For each of the creatures who have their being from You, brings thanks to You: Angels their songs; the heavens a star; the wise men their gifts; the shepherds wonder; the earth a cave; the wilderness a manger; but we ... the Virgin Mother."

Through the tender mercy of our God the day dawns from on high above us to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Central to the composition of this Icon is the yawning black mouth of the cave, symbolizing the world plunged into the darkness of sin through man's fall from grace: "The darkness of the cave is a rich symbol. It makes us think of that night outside of time, the eternal mysterious night of the generation of the Word by the Unbegotten father. The darkness of night in the Nativity Icon turns our thoughts first of all to the illumination which is the light of the sacred image."

The wilderness which gave a place to the Sun of Justice and Truth is a fulfillment of the Old Testament prefiguration of the wilderness where the manna was given to the Israelites; the God who rained man's food in the Eucharist. The Lamb slain for the sustenance of mankind on his journey to the Promised Land is laid upon the altar

symbolized by the manger brought as a gift of the wilderness to the divine Word who became a baby to redeem mankind.

The emptying - **kenosis** - of the God-head, His complete abasement is shown by the swaddling clothes, the cave, the manger. The God invisible in nature becomes flesh for the sight and touch of mankind for the healing of him whose life was fractured in the original fall. The swaddling clothes in which the Virgin wraps the child point to the winding sheet in another cave, the sepulcher, to follow at the end of His abbreviated life among us.

“The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand” (Isaiah 1:3). Although the Gospels do not mention these attendants at the birth, the ox and the donkey stand immediately beside the child in all the Icons of the Nativity, at its very center; they have been faithful companions through out the centuries. The God of heaven and earth poised between dumb beasts, wrapped in the poverty of kenosis, this mystery far exceeds what any human mind can conceive.

Eve became the mother of all the living; in the new Eve we have the Mother of all the Redeemed. The Virgin Mother is the highest thanksgiving offering that mankind could make to the Creator and in the Virgin mankind affirms the salvation which is to come by the means of the incarnation of the very person of God, the Word. We celebrate in this feast the re-creation of all things, the renewal of all who are born on earth, renewal through this new Eve.

Mary’s central position in the Icon of the Feast, as well as her size, points out her unique role. She is immediately beside the Child yet outside the cave, for she never dwelt in the dark regions of sin. At the time of the Nestorian heresy, in order to point to the divine origin of the Child and the virginity of the other, the Virgin is seen half-sitting, a sign of the absence of the usual sufferings of childbirth.

Joseph’s struggle with the wonder of the virgin birth indicates not only his own drama but also that of all mankind in the acceptance of that miracle which exceeds all words and reason, the birth-giving of the Virgin Mother to the Word of God.

Balancing the turmoil of Joseph are the Magi who approach bringing their gifts. The star they follow is not only a cosmic wonder but a messenger from the world above telling of the birth of Him who formed the stars. The Magi represent the beginning of nations who would come to Christ.

NATIVITY

S R A T S S T F I G D A E C F G O C
 A B M A R Y C H I U T D S H J J Z X
 F R A N K I N C E N S E H R E N R P
 K M E H E L H T E B E R E I R O A B
 L M K I N G S N O P V E P S U I C D
 R S L E G N A R S T O D H T S T M N
 A U V C H R I S T M A S E W A A D E
 T X N A T I V I T Y H Y R Z L N B A
 S U S E J A B G O L D T D C E R Y Z
 Y D E F O G K J J H C L R T M A Q P
 B M N O S V I R G I N A I I P C B A
 A T R Q E R E G N A M S V R B N O P
 B D R T P U X H G K I C A E B I J L
 U V V I H I G R I V S M Y R R H O P
 N Y E E B S A V I O U R L F O M C K
 F R A N N I N C E N S E Z C U P O T
 H B I J Q T P O E B V C X Z A S D F



- ADVENT** – St. Philip's Fast; 40 days of fasting in preparation for the Nativity
- ANGELS** – Angels sang "Peace on earth" the first Christmas morn.
- BABY** – The Infant Jesus, the Son of God.
- BETHLEHEM** – The City of David where the Messiah was born.
- BIRTH** – Mary gave birth to Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.
- CAVE** – The place where Jesus was born.
- CHRIST** – The Messiah, the Savior of the world, born on Christmas day.
- CHRISTMAS** – The holy day of glory and joy because Christ is born.
- FRANKINCENSE** – One of the gifts of the Wise Men to Jesus the newborn King.
- GIFTS** – The offerings given to Jesus on Christmas day.
- GOLD** – One of the gifts of the wise Men to Jesus, the newborn King.
- INCARNATION** – God became man by taking on our human flesh.
- JESUS** – Born on Christmas Day, the Messiah, the Son of God.
- JOSEPH** – Husband of Mary, guardian and protector of Jesus.
- KINGS** – They were the Wise Men who came to honor Jesus with their gifts.
- MANGER** – The Crib for the infant Jesus.
- MARY** – The Virgin Mother of Jesus.
- MYRRH** – expensive oil: One of the gifts of the wise Men to Jesus, the newborn King.
- NATIVITY** – Means "birth"
- SAVIOUR** – Jesus, the Messiah, the Redeemer of the People.
- SHEPHERD** – came to worship the infant Jesus.
- STAR** – The Wise men followed the star to the place where Jesus was born.
- VISIT** – The Angels, Shepherds and Wise Men came to spend time with Jesus.

Saint Stephen

Commemorated on December 27 (January 9)

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called "archdeacon." He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty. In the words of Asterias, he was "the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel."

Filled with the Holy Spirit, St Stephen preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned St Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. St Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, St Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death St Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Protomartyr Stephen, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stephen on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

St Stephen is also commemorated on August 2 (15) (Translation of his relics) and on September 15(28) (Uncovering of his relics in the year 415).

Troparion – Tone 4

O Protomartyr and mighty warrior of Christ our God, * You are victorious in battle and crowned with glory, O holy Stephen! * You confounded the council of your persecutors, * Beholding your Savior enthroned at the right hand of the Father. * Never cease to intercede for the salvation of our souls!

Kontakion – Tone 3

Yesterday the Master assumed our flesh and became our guest; * Today His servant is stoned to death and departs in the flesh, * The glorious Protomartyr Stephen.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS
NOTE OF THANKS

On behalf of my wife, Pani Dobrodyka Elizabeth and our Family, we would like to thank all of our faithful parishioners for their kind greetings, cards, Christmas wishes, gifts and prayers. I would also like to thank our Parish Sisterhood for their most generous Christmas gift. May God bless you and keep you, may He always shower you with His tender loving care and may you always grow in His love!

Love and Prayers,
Father Stephen & Pani Dobrodyka Elizabeth

SPECIAL THANKS - are expressed to those who helped make this year's celebration of the Nativity so special:

- ❖ To all who came and brought food to make this year's Holy Supper so special.
- ❖ To our good friends at McCreary – Harra Funeral Home for once again donating our annual calendars and this year's wreaths that decorate our Church doors.
- ❖ To John of Belak's Flowers for donating poinsettias.
- ❖ To John of Kirks Flowers for donating poinsettias.
- ❖ To Linda Hnatow for chairing the donations for the Flowers for Nativity.
- ❖ To Our Parish UOL for setting up the Christmas Tree and decorating the Church.
- ❖ To Nancy Hlywiak and our Parish Choir for singing like the angels!
- ❖ To our Altar Boys for serving and helping at the Altar.
- ❖ To all who helped in the cleaning of the Church!

May God grant all of you many, happy and blessed years!

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY - is expressed to Christine Morrison, 1/7; John Serth, 1/7; Autumn Rose Fox, 1/9; Stephanie Humeniuk, 1/9; Nancy Hlywiak, 1/10 & Joseph Stevens, 1/10. May God grant them a very happy birthday and keep them for many, happy and blessed years!

HOLY SUPPER – will be scheduled for Christmas Eve, January 6 at 6:00 PM. If you would like to attend please sign in at the dessert table.

MEETINGS

Parish Board – Wednesday, January 14 @ 6:30 PM

Annual Meeting – Sunday, February 1

100th ANNIVERSARY – will be held on Saturday, July 17th with a 10:00 AM – Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with a Banquet at the Claymont Ballroom. Mark your calendars! Our first fund Raiser for the event is the sale of T-shirts (\$10) polo shirts (\$15) and sweat shirts (\$20) with the Anniversary Logo on them thanks to the art and stitching work of Michael Kapelus.

MINISTRY SCHEDULE

(Please find a substitute if you cannot make a given week)

January 4 – Matthew Andreas and Victor Kaliakin
January 11- Matthew Andreas and Victor Kaliakin
January 18 – Sonya Patronik and John Plachuta
January 25 - Sonya Patronik and John Plachuta
February 1 – Linda Hnatow and Matthew Andreas
February 8 – Linda Hnatow and Matthew Andreas

CALENDER OF EVENTS - 2026

January 6 - Holy Supper 6PM
January 7 – Nativity of Our Lord – 9:30 AM Liturgy
Sunday, February 1 – Annual Meeting
Monday, February 23 – 1st Day of the Great Fast
Saturday, March 28 – Spring Bazaar
Sunday, April 5 – Palm Sunday – Easter Egg Hunt
Sunday, April 12 – Resurrection of the Lord
Sunday, April 19 – St. Thomas Sunday – Visiting Cemeteries
Sunday, May 31 – Pentecost
Monday, June 8 – Apostle' Fast
Sunday, July 12 – Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul – Patronal Dinner
Saturday, November 7 – Fall Bazaar
Saturday, November 28 – St. Philip Fast
Sunday, December 20 – UOL Cookie Sale

GREETER MINISTRY SCHEDULE

January 4- David and Eve Lazaration
January 11 - Zina Twardus and Nancy Tur
January 18 - Kathy and Michael Chalfont
January 25 - Sandy Cramer
February 1 - Sonya Patronik

NATIVITY FAST SOUP SALE – Our UOL will be making vegan soups for the Nativity Fast beginning today for \$10 a quart. Money raised will be for the UOL Thanksgiving project and will be sent for humanitarian aide in Ukraine.

FLOWERS FOR THE NATIVITY – Donations for the Nativity Flowers are being accepted by Linda Hnatow. They can be for the Health of or in Memory of Family member s and friends. Donation requested is \$15.

READERS MINISTRY SCHEDULE

January 4 - Thomas Sulpizi
January 11 - Pani Elizabeth Hutnick
January 18 - Linda Hnatow
January 25 - Jean Roeth
February 1 - Thomas Scholz
February 8 - Andrew Duncan
February 15 - John Plachuta

CLEANING OF THE CHURCH MINISTRY SCHEDULE

Week of January 5 - Earle and Jennifer Robinson
Week of January 12 - John Plachuta and David Lazaration
Week of January 19 - Thomas and Lynn Sulpizi
Week of January 26 - Nancy Hlywiak, Jean Roeth, Zina Twardus
Week of February 2 - Earle and Jennifer Robinson
Week of February 9 - Michael Tilson & Linda Hnatow, Irene Maskaly
Week of February 16 - Mark & Laura Andreas



PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE ILL – Metropolitan Antony, Archbishop Daniel, Archimandrite Raphael, Father George Bazylevsky, Father Vasyl Dovhan, Father Oleh Hucul, Father Andrew Molewski, Father James Weremedic, Father Volodymyr Wronskyj, Matushka Andrejuk, Matushka Laura Odell, Matushka Lisa Weremedic, Pani Matka Oksanna Bazylevsky, Pani Matka Maryann Ozlanski, Jonathan Angelo, Colby Atkinson, Shannon Austin, Joyce Belles, Joyce Bendoakas, Ethel Bernhard, Irene Billon, James Bolton, Maria Borowenski, Betty Bosland, Becky Bosley, Angie Brengle, Paul Brengle, Patricia Bringle, Richard Bringle, John Brick, Fedir Bukacz, Christine Cain, Mark Cello, Erik Colazo, Alex Czernik, Sharon Dalaski, Stephen Dalecki, David Dalldorf, Taylor Davis, Peter DiVirgilio, James Dudrick, Kathleen Dugan, Mary Eagleton, Maria Economou, Rose Eldridge, Archantula Fanjoy, Mary Farell, Kandi Fullerton, James Garrett, Lisa Gee, Peter Glenn, Ivan Golovnirov, Kathleen Gortva, Staci Gray, Charles Gunther, David Hamilton, Richard Haslam, Rick Hastings, Victoria Herrschaft, Carla Hitchings, Greg Hitchings, Alicia Hlywak, John Hlywak, Daniel Holoviak, Jennifer Huertes, Serhii Ivashyna, Violet Jaskolka, Stephen Johnson, Bill Jones, Linda Josepinson, Michael Kapelus, Walter Katolik, Diane Keyser, Wendy Klinedinst, Tommy Knight, Judith Kocinski, Lorissa Kozakova, Francis Lano, Ed Lavender, Ron Lazaration, Joan Libera, Karen Livick, Charles Lontor, Alla Lysenko, Jeremy Madea, Andrew Makolynyk, Jean Marano, Frederick McCarthy, Fred McKirachan, Stephen McNulty, Ronald Michel, Mary Ann Michalcewicz, Michelle Michalcewiz, Lisa Miller, Matthew Miller, Mary Elizabeth Moran, Barry Morris, Elsie Moroz, Karen Needham, Julie Neff, Ann Nester, Rick Orner, Sienna Ozboya, Betty Painter, Anastasios Pantelopulos, Anthony Pantelopulos, Daphne Pantelopulos, George Pantelopulos, Linda Phillips, Joseph Pierson, Barry Pinkowicz, Janilyn Pinkowicz, Bernice Pinkowicz, Joseph Porini, Robert Powers, Joanne Procak, Joseph Ptak, Carol Purse, Chuck Redden, Patricia Redden, Sharon Reigh, Christopher Riehl, Arlene Roginski, Wyatt Roland, Andrea Roman, Jeff Rozwadowski, Glenn Runyan, Carol Rusk, Richard Scharba, Isaac Schmidt, Clay Seman, John Serth, Larissa Serth, Dawn Sheets, Justin Sheets, Emily Smitheman, Georgie Smolyar, Alexandra Sparco, Natalia Stanford, Rich Steinman, Joseph Stevens, Noel Strobino, Charles Joseph Sweeney, Evelyn Synczyszyn, Michael Synczyszyn, Pavlo Tabak, Nicholas Taylor, Sue Taylor, Elenora Thomas, Lydia Thomas, Brysen Tomei, Dominic Tomei, Mark Tomei, Violet Tomei, Aria Tonner, Mariel Trimble, Martha Vignali, Jack Vognetz, Margaret Vognetz, Marilyn Wagner, Olena Wasylevska, James Watts, Chris Way, Leah Way, Barbara Weeks, Laura Worley, Jack Ziegler & James Zook



St. Matthew in his Gospel tells something of the meaning of this name when he quotes Gabriel: "you shall call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." The chosen name, Jesus, depicts exactly the chosen work of the Lord. Why did God become Man? Why did He leave the heights of heaven and dwell in the depths of earth? Why did the Creator take upon Himself the frailties of the creature? He did it to save mankind, to do something for people that they could not do for themselves. He came to save.

St. Paul takes up this wonderful theme of the name and work of the Saviour when he writes in his Epistle to the Philippians: ". . . Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied



Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

As for the word "Christ," which has come to be used as a proper name for our Lord, it really is His title. This is the name that identifies Him. The word means "The Anointed One." It refers to the Messiahship. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of our Saviour. Let Him enter our hearts and truly make this day a holy and joyous one.