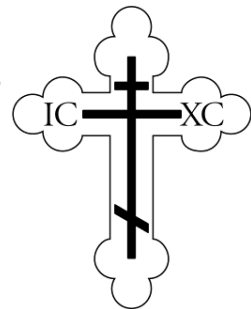
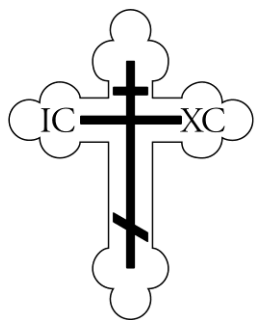


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Merrillville, IN 46410
(219)947-4748
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Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle
(219)384-6826 • frjacobvansickle@gmail.com

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or
after Vespers or by appointment

Welcome visitors!
Please join us in the
parish hall after Divine
Liturgy for coffee hour.

December 18, 2022

The Sunday Before Nativity

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 2 – Resurrectional Troparion

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal,
You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead.
And when from the depths You raised the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!”

Tone 2 – Troparion of the Holy Fathers

Great are the accomplishments of faith,
for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though
in the waters of rest;
and the Prophet Daniel appeared
a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep://
So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

Tone 6 – Kontakion of the Holy Fathers

You did not worship the graven image,

O thrice-blessed ones,

but armed with the immaterial Essence of God,

you were glorified in a trial by fire.

From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying:

“Hasten, O compassionate One!

Speedily come to our aid, //

for You are merciful and able to do as You will!”

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 4 – Prokeimenon of the Holy Fathers (Daniel 3)

Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers,

and praised and glorified is Your Name forever!

Epistle: Hebrews 11.9-10, 17-23, 32-40 (Before Nativity)

Brethren: It was by faith that Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise; for he awaited the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; the receiver of the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” determining that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not receiving deliverance, that

they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others were tried by mocking and scourging, yes, and by chains and imprisonment. They were stoned; they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, because God had provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Gospel: Matthew 1.1-25 (Before Nativity)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, desired to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary

your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

So, all this was done that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us.’” Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

New. Dep. Tony Klassen
Thomas Martin
Donna Chabre
Jimmy Grosdanis
Hanna Kostyuk

Ev.Mem. Michael Kormet ('53)
Anna Berdi ('61)
John Bobaneyw ('63)
Karen Peterson (2018)

Health & Salv.

Archpr. Peter
Mat. Cynthia
Archpr. John
Mat. Anne
Dn. Nicholas
Kevin
Jon
Tanya
Jovan
Tom
Jennifer
Rollie
Joseph
Nadia
Joseph
Linda
Claudia
Carol
Snezana
Ryan
Nathan
Kara
Djuro

Dominic
Declan
Hudson
Ayden
Hyland
Jason
Ted
James
Pamela
Alexander
Ronald
Ivanka
Karen
Sandra
Linda
Jim
John
Martha
Mark
Michelle
Irene
Michelle
Erika
Luke

Jo
Stephanie
Mary Ann
Robb
Desiree
Jaroslava
Andrew
Andrew
Vadim
Hanna
Alex
Carl
Laura
Chrisan
Gerald
Olga
Janie
David
Sharon
Tanya
Renee
Carissa
Ashton
Doris

Laura	Mark	Jerry
Duane	Catherine	Penelope
Elizabeth	Aaron	Cora
Karen	Dale	Brandi
Alexa	Ebony	Joyce
Miriana	Peggy	Paul
Olga	Sue	Galina
Richard	Victoria	Helen
Klaudia	Janet	Kathleen
Nicodemus	Tom	N.Ill. John
Nada	Wilma	

*If you know someone who needs prayer, please give their name to Fr Jacob

Special Petitions at the Augmented Litany:

We pray, O Lord our God, for all those who suffer from acts of war, especially for the victims in Ukraine. We pray for Your peace and Your mercy in the midst of the great suffering of Your people. Vouchsafe to accept the prayers of the Church, so that by Your goodness, peace may return to all peoples; O Lord, hear us and have mercy.

We also pray You, O Lord our God, to remember and have mercy on our Orthodox brothers and sisters in Russia and Ukraine, who are involved in violent conflict. Remove from their midst all hostility, confusion and hatred. Lead everyone along the path of reconciliation and peace, we pray You, hear us and have mercy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tomorrow, our former parishioner **Thomas Martin will be buried in our cemetery.** A brief visitation will be held beginning at **10am at Geisen-Pruzin Funeral Home in Merrillville.** Burial Service will be at **11am at St. Mary's cemetery** on Ridge Road in Gary.

For **Bible Study** tomorrow night, read **Wisdom of Solomon 12-15.**

During this season of Advent, we rededicate ourselves to **prayer**, especially by making a **confession**, we keep the **fast**, and we find opportunities to **give alms to those in need.**

Please make any **end-of-year gifts** to the Church **by next Sunday, December 25.** Gifts received after that date will be recorded in January, as our Treasurer begins to close out the books for the year.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 20: Parish Council @ 7pm

Dec 23: Royal Hours of Nativity @ 10am

Dec 24: Great Vespers for the Nativity of our Lord @ 1pm
Vigil for the Nativity of our Lord @ 6pm

Dec 25: No coffee hour (Christmas Day)

Jan 1: Annual Parish Christmas potluck after Divine Liturgy

Jan 5: Royal Hours of Theophany @ 10am
Theophany Vespers with the Great Blessing of Water @ 6pm

Jan 6: Divine Liturgy for Theophany @ 10am

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$3,803

2022 Nativity Encyclical

of His Beatitude, our Metropolitan Tikhon

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America: My Beloved Children in the Lord,

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

'But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the Child and his Mother, and go to the land of Israel..."'
(Mt. 2:19-20)

The protagonist, so to speak, for the first two chapters of Saint Matthew's Gospel is the humble and silent man whom we call Righteous Joseph the Betrothed. Joseph is called 'just,' that is, he walked according to the commandments of God (Mt. 1:19). And, according to the scriptures, in keeping the commandments, a man may learn true knowledge. As the Psalmist says, 'Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments' (Ps. 118:66).

We find that this is exceptionally true in the case of Saint Joseph. So just, so righteous, was he, that he was worthy to be taught and led by an angel. In an event that is sometimes called the annunciation to Saint Joseph, an angel comes to the righteous man

in his moment of doubt concerning the pregnancy of his betrothed, telling him not fear. And this exhortation not to be afraid is no mere formality, for the next words of the angel disclose a dread and fearful task. The angel asks Joseph to serve the most holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary in place of an earthly husband ('take Mary your wife'), and to minister to the Lord Jesus Christ in the place of an earthly father ('you shall call his name Jesus').

This alone—the command to serve as a foster father to the God of all and as a guardian for the Mother of the Light—would be fearful enough. But soon Saint Joseph and the holy Mother and Child for whom he is obliged to care are beset by extraordinary circumstances: a murder plot, an escape to a distant land, and a sojourn in that foreign country. We can only assume that, in Egypt, among strangers, away from home and property, the responsibility to provide for his supposed wife and son weighed very heavily upon this righteous man. But again, the words of an angel, and this time these are words of relief and joy: 'Go the land of Israel.' Return home to your kin; return home to your property; return home to your people and your customs and your land.

The first time an angel visited the righteous Joseph, he brought a dread order from the Almighty, an order that would have to be carried out under the most trying of circumstances. The second time an angel came, he brought a welcome reprieve. But in both cases, the just man Joseph was equally obedient to the divine will. When he was commanded to care for Mother and Child, he took up the task without hesitation, no matter what difficulties ensued. And when he was told to return to Israel, he went just as readily.

The same paradoxical way that Saint Joseph protected and cared for the omnipotent Master who holds all creation in the palm of his hand, God has given to us, Orthodox Christians, a special charge of sacred stewardship. God needs nothing from us, and yet he delights in allowing us to cooperate with him in the work of preaching the Gospel and sanctifying the world. We might say that, just like the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, we are, by divine grace, charged with caring for the newborn Christ. For what is the Church but Christ's Body, growing in this world in wisdom and stature until it reaches the measure of the stature of the fullness in the age to come (Lk. 2:52, Eph. 4:13)? And we all share a responsibility, according to our station in life, to care for the Church through prayer, financial support, sacramental participation, and sharing and teaching the faith.

And then, on another level, we are each charged to care for Christ in our life, in our own heart. Saint Paul wrote to the Galatians that he was in travail until Christ be formed in them (Gal. 4:19). Each of us is called to reveal Christ in our life, to become a saint, to become Christ by grace. Through baptism and the Eucharist, we have all received Jesus Christ within ourselves, as it were as a newborn Child. By prayer, careful practice of the virtues, attentiveness to our thoughts, and the cultivation of authentic love for God and man, we allow Christ to grow in us, until, we pray, it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).

Today, celebrating the Nativity of the Savior in the flesh, may we all take Saint Joseph as our example as we seek to foster Christ in the Church and in our own hearts. Let us practice the commandments, discern the will of God, and do his will, even when the circumstances are difficult. Truly, this world is an Egypt, and caring for Christ and his Church as Saint Joseph did always involves obstacles and challenges. But if we sojourn with the Christ-child in Egypt, faithfully attending to him in our lives and our communities, we can be assured that we, like Saint Joseph, will one day hear those welcome words: 'Go to the land of Israel'—that is, come, ye righteous, and enter the heavenly mansions the Father has prepared for you from before all ages (Mt. 25:34).

By caring for our infant Savior and Lord in this way, we show our willingness to cooperate with the grace of God, God who so desired to have us as his fellow-workers, his brethren, and his friends that he deigned to be born in a cave and laid in a manger, on a cold night 'while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone' (Wis. 18:14). To him, our newborn God and Lord, be all glory, honor, and adoration, together with his eternal Father and his most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit.

With the blessing of the newborn Messiah, who is Lord and God before the ages, I remain sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Glory to God for all things!