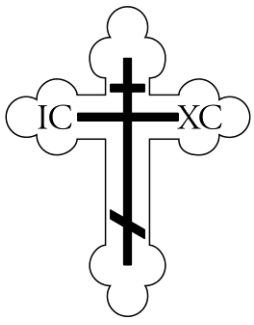


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Merrillville, IN
(219)947-4748
www.ptvm.com

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
hall after Divine
Liturgy for coffee hour.

December 22, 2024

Sunday of the Holy Fathers

Forefeast of Nativity

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 1 – Resurrectional Troparion

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews,
while the soldiers were guarding Your most pure body,
You rose on the third day, O Savior,
granting life to the world.

The powers of heaven therefore cried to You, O Giver of Life:
“Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ!

Glory to Your Kingdom!//

Glory to Your dispensation, O You who love mankind!”

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 4 – Troparion of the Forefeast

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all!
Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from
the Virgin in the cave!
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit;
if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam.//
Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

Tone 1 – Kontakion of the Holy Fathers

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha!
The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she
carries in her womb.
The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him,//
and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

Tone 3 – Kontakion of the Forefeast

Today the Virgin comes to the cave
to give birth to the Eternal Word.
Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!
Glorify with the angels and the shepherds//
the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little child!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 4 – Prokeimenon for 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 (Sunday before Nativity)

Brethren: By faith, Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding 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 accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being 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, for God had provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Gospel: Matthew 1.1-25 (Sunday 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 with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded 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 it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "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

N.Dep. Faryn Valdez

Marie Snodgrass

Joan Yurko

Archbishop Peter (Loukianoff)

Gregory Peyovich

Ev.Mem. Anastasia Pysh ('22)

George Silchitz ('24)

Anna Reed ('55)

Boris Sarafin ('84)

Luba Sarafin (2006)

Mary Drozda (2014)

Health & Salv.

Priest Jan & St.

Theodosius

parish

Archpr. Peter

Mat. Cynthia

Hierom. John

Archpr. Jonathan

Mat. Vera

Pr. Patrick

Pr. Gregory

Mat. Beverly

Pro.dn. Nicholas

Mat. Anne

Nun Theodora

Brendan

Rollie	Sharon	Steven	Monica
Claudia	Tanya	Jamie	Charles
Mary Ann	Renee	Kyleigh	Kimberly
Raymond	Ashton	Lauren	Abigail
Edward	Michael	Kyle	Charles
Charlotte	Chris	Linda	Rosemary
Joseph	Nina	Denise	Nicholas
Janice	Carissa	Sergei	Natalie
Klaudia	Carol	John	Jovan
Maja	Snezana	Cindy	Michael
Raymond	Ryan	Ron	Daniel
Anne	Nathan	Matthew	Abram
Desiree	Kara	John	Zoë
Robb	Karen	Erin	Brenda
Basil	Alisa	Aaron	Sergei
Emmelia	Michael	Marcietta	Connie
Gerald	Moses	Galina	Lisa
Janet	Helena	Maria	Mazzy
Gerald	James	Alla	John
Rebecca	Elijah	Elizabeth	Terry
Christopher	Lydia	Samuel	Erin
Brianna	Nina	Joseph	Everett
Logan	George	Dwight	Angie
Olga	Linda	Renee	
Janie	Kimberly	Dominik	

To add the name of a loved one recently departed or for the anniversary of their repose, or someone living and in particular need of prayer, please speak to Fr Jacob

Special Petition at the Augmented Litany:

We pray, O Lord our God, for all those who suffer from acts of war, especially the victims in Ukraine, Russia, Israel, and Palestine. 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, hearken and have mercy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Sunday is our annual parish Yolka and Christmas potluck. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex to indicate what dish you plan to bring.

2025 Church Calendars are in the narthex for pick-up. Please observe **the limit of one calendar per adult** until everyone has had a chance to pick theirs up.

For **Bible Study** tomorrow, read 1 Timothy 4-6.

Please make any **year-end donations to the Church by next Sunday, December 29**. After that date, our hard-working treasurer begins the long process of closing out the books for the year. Donations after that date will be posted in January 2025.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 23: **Bible Study @ 7pm**

Dec 24: **Royal Hours of Nativity @ 9am**
Vesperal Liturgy of Nativity @ 10:30am
Vigil of Nativity @ 7pm

Dec 25: **Divine Liturgy of Nativity @ 9am**

Dec 29: **Yolka/Nativity Potluck** after Divine Liturgy

Dec 31: **Festal Vespers for the Circumcision of the Lord @ 6pm**

Jan 1: **Divine Liturgy for the Circumcision of the Lord** at Descent of the Holy Ghost in Merrillville @ 10am

Jan 3: **Royal Hours of Theophany @ 10am**

Jan 5: **Theophany Vespers with Great Blessing of Water @ 1pm**

Jan 6: **Divine Liturgy of Theophany w/Blessing of Water @ 10am**

Jan 11: **Women's Group self-defense class** in the hall @ 11am

Jan 18: **Priestly Ordination of Protodeacon Nicholas** at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Chicago @ 9:30am

Last Week's Gifts to the Lord: \$4,827

Nativity Message 2024

from His Eminence, our Archbishop Daniel

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Venerable Monastics, and Beloved Faithful,

“God is born of a Virgin and is revealed to men”: as we sing these words, we recall the great mystery of the Incarnation of the

Son of God. Gathering in these holy days to celebrate in the churches and chapels throughout our Diocese, to reflect upon this great mystery, let us also turn our thoughts to the one who was instrumental in fulfilling God's plan for our salvation: Mary, the "One who gave birth to God the Word" and "truly Theotokos."

We are first introduced to Mary of Nazareth at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke when, just after having spoken her "yes" to the angel in the moment of the Annunciation, she begins her trip "in great haste" from her hometown of Nazareth to the hill country of Judah, to be with her elderly relative Elizabeth in her time of need. The angel Gabriel had revealed to Mary that Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy (Luke 1:26-38). This explains why Mary, who carried within her an even greater mystery, goes to see Elizabeth and stays with her for three months, until Elizabeth gives birth to John, the Forerunner and Baptizer of Christ.

In the meeting between these two women, it is the young one, Mary, who offers the first greeting. The Gospel tells us: "she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth" (Luke 1:40). After this greeting, Elizabeth feels enveloped in great wonder as she is filled with the Holy Spirit. This wonder and joy is echoed in her response to Mary: "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

In celebrating the Nativity, we ourselves are called to recognize the moments of the miraculous which are part of our daily lives. And what are these miraculous moments in everyday life? The first place is in *the other*, in those around us, in whom we recognize a brother or sister, because since the birth of Jesus occurred, every human face is marked with the image of the Son of God. Above all, we encounter this miraculous presence of Christ in the face of the poor, because God Himself entered the world poor, and it was to the poor, in the first place, that He revealed Himself.

Another place in which we recognize the miraculous is within history, the chronicle of human life and experience. However, we run the risk of reading history backwards and outside of its Christian context. For example, we generally think that history is defined by the rise and fall of governments, wars and conflicts, regulated by business and finances, and dominated by the powers of this world. But it is God, the God of Creation who entered human life, who defines and rules over human history. As Mary sings in the *Magnificat*, it is the Lord who puts down the mighty from their thrones and exalts those of low degree, who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty (Luke 1:52-53).

Yet another miraculous encounter is within the Church. To perceive the Church as miraculous means not limiting oneself to consider it only as a religious institution, but to embrace the Church as a mother who, despite any blemishes and wrinkles, allows the features of the beloved Bride of Christ the Lord to shine through—a Church that is able to recognize the signs of faithful love that God continuously sends her. This is the Church that always has her doors open wide, and her arms open to welcome everyone. Moreover, the Church, our Mother, goes out from her own doors to seek with a loving smile and warm embrace all those who are far off in order to bring them to the mercy of God. The Church herself provides this miraculous moment which we are invited to experience in these holydays of light and love.

God has given us all of Himself by giving His Only Son, who is all His joy. It is only with the heart of Mary, the humble and poor daughter of Zion, who became the Mother of the Son of the Most High, that it is possible to rejoice and be glad for the great gift of God and for His unpredictable surprise. Through the birth of Jesus, may she help us to perceive the miraculous which surrounds us every day—in our brothers and sisters, in the lived experience of history, and within the Church. In the birth of Jesus may we recognize the Gift of Gifts, the undeserved Gift who brings us His salvation.

In the spiritual atmosphere of joy and peace of the Nativity of Christ, I greet all of you with the joy of the Feast. Once again, I state my prayerful wish for peace: peace in families and homes, peace in parishes, peace in the ministry of our clergy and faithful, and peace for those who are suffering the horrors of war throughout the world, especially our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and in the Middle East.

As you gather with family, with your parish communities, and with all your loved ones, I send you my sincere fatherly greetings and archpastoral blessings. May the Lord grant you a bright and blessed celebration of the Birth of Christ and a New Year filled with an abundance of heavenly blessings.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

With love in the Incarnate Son of God,

DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest

Glory to God for all things!