

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.



ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

OCA – Diocese of New York & New Jersey

The Most Reverend Michael, Archbishop of NY & the Diocese of NY/NJ

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searforce, Temporary Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Dean Inferrera

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Resurrectional Troparion in the Tone 4

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of thy Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles: “Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen, granting the world great mercy!”

Troparion for Forefathers in Tone 2

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!

Troparion of the Forefeast in Tone 4

Mary was of David’s seed, so she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem. She bore in her womb the Fruit not sown by man. The time for the birth was at hand. Since there was no room at the inn, the cave became a beautiful palace for the Queen. Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.

Kontakion for Forefathers in Tone 1

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare thyself, 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.

Kontakion of the Forefeast in Tone 3

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!

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Aunt Jean & Sandra, on their birthdays, offered by Linda & Richard Dantine.

Robert Morris, Jr., on his birthday, offered by his grandmother Lore Stefy.

Denis Larbito, on her birthday, offered by Joseph Hartzel.

Billy Kuzemchak, offered by Bill & MaryAnn Kuzemchak.

Alex Guedes, hip replacement 12/26, offered by Susan & Michael Guedes.

Members of the Church, offered by V.P. Desan Inferrera.

Trudy & Phil Ellmore, offered by Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

In Memory of:

Julie, who fell asleep in the Lord on Friday, December 15, mother of Archpriest Steven Voytovich, offered by Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Bulletin Sponsors

**Linda & Richard Dantine, Lore Stefy,
Joseph Hartzel, Bill & MaryAnn
Kuzemchak, Susan & Michael Guedes and
Dean Inferrera.**

SAINTS AND FEASTS OF THE DAY

DECEMBER 24, 2017

29TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. EVE OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST . SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY.



Sunday before the Nativity

The Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord (December 18-24) is known as the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. On this day the Church commemorates all those who were well-pleasing to God from all ages, from Adam to Saint Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, those who are mentioned in the genealogy of Luke 3:23-38. The holy prophets and prophetesses are also remembered today, especially the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths (December 17).

The Troparion to the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths (“Great are the accomplishments of faith...”) is quite similar to the Troparion for Saint Theodore the Recruit (February 17, and the first Saturday of Great Lent). The Kontakion to Saint Theodore, who suffered martyrdom by fire, reminds us that he also had faith as his breastplate (see I Thessalonians 5:8).



Eve of the Nativity of our Lord

In Slavic practice, on the eve of the Nativity of the Lord, the liturgical services consist of the Royal Hours with the Typika, Vespers, and the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. At Vigil in the evening, Great Compline is followed by Matins.

If the Nativity falls on Sunday, however, the Royal Hours with the Typika are read on the preceding Friday. On Friday evening, the office of the Forefeast, December 24. The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is served on Saturday morning. At Vigil in the evening, Great Compline is followed by Matins. On Sunday morning, the Liturgy of Saint Basil is celebrated.

If the Nativity falls on a Monday, Royal Hours with the Typika are read on Friday December 22. On Saturday evening and Sunday morning we follow the order for the Sunday before the Nativity with the office of the Forefeast for December 24. On Sunday morning the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is served. Vigil on Sunday evening consists of Great Compline is followed by Matins. On Monday morning the Liturgy of Saint Basil is celebrated.

On the eve of the Nativity, instead of three readings from the Old Testament at Vespers, there are eight readings (from Genesis, Numbers, Micah, Isaiah, Baruch, Daniel, and two more readings from Isaiah). The entrance is made with the Gospel.

At the end of Liturgy the priest places a lighted candle in a candlestick in the center of the church. Then the Troparion and Kontakion of the Feast are sung. At Vigil on the evening of the twenty-fourth, Great Compline is followed by Matins.



Nun-Martyr Eugenia of Rome

The Holy Martyr Eugenia, was a Roman by birth. She lived at Alexandria, where her father Philip was sent by the emperor Commodus (180-192) to be Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her beauty and good disposition. Many illustrious youths sought her hand, but she did not wish to marry anyone, for she was determined to preserve her virginity.

Provisionally, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she asked permission to visit one of the family estates outside the city, supposedly to enjoy the countryside. She left in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men’s clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias (July 14), who learned about her in a vision. He blessed her to pursue asceticism at the monastery disguised as the monk Eugene.

By her ascetic labors, Saint Eugenia acquired the gift of healing. Once, a rich young woman named Melanthis turned to her for help. Seeing "Eugene," this woman burned with an impure passion, and when she was spurned, she falsely accused the saint of attempted rape. Saint Eugenia came to trial before the Prefect of Egypt (her father), and she was forced to reveal her secret. Her parents and brothers rejoiced to find the one for whom they had long grieved.

After a while they all accepted holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent assassins to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon Saint Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

Saint Claudia went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There Saint Eugenia continued with monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, the emperor Galienus (260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Saints Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and Saint Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. Saint Eugenia sent her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Saints Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to make them sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought Saint Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol.

They threw the holy martyr into the Tiber with a stone about her neck, but the stone became untied and she remained unharmed. She also remained unscathed in the fire. Then they cast her into a pit, where she remained for ten days. During this time the Savior Himself appeared to her and said that she would enter into the heavenly Kingdom on the day He was born. When this radiant Feast came, the executioner put her to death with a sword. After her death, Saint Eugenia appeared to her mother to tell her beforehand the day of her own death.

Martyr Philip the father of Eugenia of Rome

The Holy Martyr Eugenia, was a Roman by birth. She lived at Alexandria, where her father Philip was sent by the emperor Commodus (180-192) to be Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her beauty and good disposition. Many illustrious youths sought her hand, but she did not wish to marry anyone, for she was determined to preserve her virginity.

Providentially, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she asked permission to visit one of the family estates outside the city, supposedly to enjoy the countryside. She left in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men's clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias (July 14), who learned about her in a vision. He blessed her to pursue asceticism at the monastery disguised as the monk Eugene.

By her ascetic labors, Saint Eugenia acquired the gift of healing. Once, a rich young woman named Melanthis turned to her for help. Seeing "Eugene," this woman burned with an impure passion, and when she was spurned, she falsely accused the saint of attempted rape. Saint Eugenia came to trial before the Prefect of Egypt (her father), and she was forced to reveal her secret. Her parents and brothers rejoiced to find the one for whom they had long grieved.

After a while they all accepted holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent assassins to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon Saint Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

Saint Claudia went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There Saint Eugenia continued with monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, the emperor Galienus (260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Saints Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and Saint Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. Saint Eugenia sent her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Saints Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to make them sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought Saint Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol.

They threw the holy martyr into the Tiber with a stone about her neck, but the stone became untied and she remained unharmed. She also remained unscathed in the fire. Then they cast her into a pit, where she remained for ten days. During this time the Savior Himself appeared to her and said that she would enter into the heavenly Kingdom on the day He was born. When this radiant Feast came, the executioner put her to death with a sword. After her death, Saint Eugenia appeared to her mother to tell her beforehand the day of her own death.

Martyr Protus

The Holy Martyr Eugenia, was a Roman by birth. She lived at Alexandria, where her father Philip was sent by the emperor Commodus (180-192) to be Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her beauty and good disposition. Many illustrious youths sought her hand, but she did not wish to marry anyone, for she was determined to preserve her virginity.

Providentially, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she asked permission to visit one of the family estates outside the city, supposedly to enjoy the countryside. She left in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men's clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias (July 14), who learned about her in a vision. He blessed her to pursue asceticism at the monastery disguised as the monk Eugene.

By her ascetic labors, Saint Eugenia acquired the gift of healing. Once, a rich young woman named Melanthis turned to her for help. Seeing "Eugene," this woman burned with an impure passion, and when she was spurned, she falsely accused the saint of attempted rape. Saint Eugenia came to trial before the Prefect of Egypt (her father), and she was forced to reveal her secret. Her parents and brothers rejoiced to find the one for whom they had long grieved.

After a while they all accepted holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent assassins to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon Saint Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

Saint Claudia went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There Saint Eugenia continued with monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, the emperor Galienus (260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Saints Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and Saint Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. Saint Eugenia sent her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Saints Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to make them sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought Saint Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol.

They threw the holy martyr into the Tiber with a stone about her neck, but the stone became untied and she remained unharmed. She also remained unscathed in the fire. Then they cast her into a pit, where she remained for ten days. During this time the Savior Himself appeared to her and said that she would enter into the heavenly

Kingdom on the day He was born. When this radiant Feast came, the executioner put her to death with a sword. After her death, Saint Eugenia appeared to her mother to tell her beforehand the day of her own death.

Martyr Hyacinthus of Rome

The Holy Martyr Eugenia, was a Roman by birth. She lived at Alexandria, where her father Philip was sent by the emperor Commodus (180-192) to be Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her beauty and good disposition. Many illustrious youths sought her hand, but she did not wish to marry anyone, for she was determined to preserve her virginity.

Providentially, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she asked permission to visit one of the family estates outside the city, supposedly to enjoy the countryside. She left in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men's clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias (July 14), who learned about her in a vision. He blessed her to pursue asceticism at the monastery disguised as the monk Eugene.

By her ascetic labors, Saint Eugenia acquired the gift of healing. Once, a rich young woman named Melanthia turned to her for help. Seeing "Eugene," this woman burned with an impure passion, and when she was spurned, she falsely accused the saint of attempted rape. Saint Eugenia came to trial before the Prefect of Egypt (her father), and she was forced to reveal her secret. Her parents and brothers rejoiced to find the one for whom they had long grieved.

After a while they all accepted holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent assassins to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon Saint Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

Saint Claudia went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There Saint Eugenia continued with monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, the emperor Galienus (260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Saints Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and Saint Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. Saint Eugenia sent her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Saints Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to make them sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought Saint Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol.

They threw the holy martyr into the Tiber with a stone about her neck, but the stone became untied and she remained unharmed. She also remained unscathed in the fire. Then they cast her into a pit, where she remained for ten days. During this time the Savior Himself appeared to her and said that she would enter into the heavenly Kingdom on the day He was born. When this radiant Feast came, the executioner put her to death with a sword. After her death, Saint Eugenia appeared to her mother to tell her beforehand the day of her own death.

Martyr Basilla of Rome

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and Saint Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. Saint Eugenia sent her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

Martyr Claudia of Rome

The Holy Martyr Eugenia, was a Roman by birth. She lived at Alexandria, where her father Philip was sent by the emperor Commodus (180-192) to be Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her

beauty and good disposition. Many illustrious youths sought her hand, but she did not wish to marry anyone, for she was determined to preserve her virginity.

Providentially, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she asked permission to visit one of the family estates outside the city, supposedly to enjoy the countryside. She left in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men's clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias (July 14), who learned about her in a vision. He blessed her to pursue asceticism at the monastery disguised as the monk Eugene.

By her ascetic labors, Saint Eugenia acquired the gift of healing. Once, a rich young woman named Melanthia turned to her for help. Seeing "Eugene," this woman burned with an impure passion, and when she was spurned, she falsely accused the saint of attempted rape. Saint Eugenia came to trial before the Prefect of Egypt (her father), and she was forced to reveal her secret. Her parents and brothers rejoiced to find the one for whom they had long grieved.

After a while they all accepted holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent assassins to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon Saint Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

Saint Claudia went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There Saint Eugenia continued with monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, the emperor Galienus (260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Saints Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and Saint Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. Saint Eugenia sent her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Saints Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to make them sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought Saint Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol.

They threw the holy martyr into the Tiber with a stone about her neck, but the stone became untied and she remained unharmed. She also remained unscathed in the fire. Then they cast her into a pit, where she remained for ten days. During this time the Savior Himself appeared to her and said that she would enter into the heavenly Kingdom on the day He was born. When this radiant Feast came, the executioner put her to death with a sword. After her death, Saint Eugenia appeared to her mother to tell her beforehand the day of her own death.

Venerable Nicholas the Monk of Bulgaria

Saint Nicholas the Former General was a military commander under the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus I (802-811). He was ordered to lead his troops against the Bulgars. On the eve of battle he was approached by the innkeeper's daughter, but he resisted her shameless attempts to seduce him.

All his comrades perished in the battle, but Nicholas remained alive. It was revealed to him in a vision that his life was spared because he had overcome temptation. After this Saint Nicholas left the world, settled into a cave. He became a schemamonk, and prayed unceasingly for his fallen soldiers. By his great ascetic efforts he so pleased the Lord, that he was granted the gift of clairvoyance.

St. Antiochus

Saint Antiochus was from Galatia, and lived during the reign of Heraclius (610-641). He witnessed the martyrdom of the monks of Saint Sava's Monastery (May 16) by the Saracens, and recorded their sufferings. He also wrote another book, called PANDECT OF THE SCRIPTURES. Divided into 130 chapters, the book examines the moral teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

A quote attributed to Saint Antiochus is found in the EVERGETINOS (Book 3:39). One of his best-known prayers is recited during Compline, "And grant us, Master, as we lay down to sleep, repose of both body and soul..."

GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READINGS

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon, Tone 4:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers / and praised and glorified is
Thy name forever! (*Song of the three Holy Children, v. 3*)
vs. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! (*v. 4*)

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 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 foundation, 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, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, 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 tempted, 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.

Alleluia, Tone 4:

We have heard with our ears, O God, for our fathers have told us. (*Psalms 43:2*)
vs. For Thou hast saved us from them that oppose us, and hast put to shame them that hate us. (*Psalms 43:8*)

Gospel Reading

Sunday before the Nativity

The Reading is from 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 Ram, and Ram 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 Amos, and Amos 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 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 commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

PARISH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

[There will be no Sunday school on Dec. 24th.](#)

Christmas Eve, Sunday morning, December 24: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
Feast of the Nativity, Monday morning, December 25: Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Feast of the Nativity, Monday, December 25th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Saturday, December 30th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, December 31st

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Saturday, January 7th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, January 8th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Request & Bulletin Sponsor: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles can be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: **Can be heard a half hour before any service.** See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Receiving Holy Communion: Holy Communion is offered to those baptized Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves for the reception of the Sacrament by prayer and fasting. Blessed Bread is available for all our visitors at the very end of the Divine Liturgy.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail: OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.

Orthodox Quote of the Day

The bodily eye cannot tolerate even the smallest speck of dust on its surface, so too the conscience, when soiled by something, cannot attain prayer.

Elder Moses of Optina



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

Acquiring Joy

Giving thanks to God for everything

Whatever the circumstances in which we find ourselves, God is giving us an opportunity to gain the freedom that comes from acquiring humility. Whatever our job, whichever task we are asked to perform, whatever life places before us, all is an opportunity to give thanks to God. Whatever difficulty or struggle we face, embracing it with a trusting heart and a willingness to please God with our response, brings on a humble heart, and a humble heart opens the doors to a peace that passes all understanding, and the Gates of Paradise are opened wide.

Gratitude, gratefulness, and thanksgiving, are different terms that address our experience with our life in Christ. When we receive everything with gratitude, our heart responds with gratefulness. And as the heart warms, we find ourselves filled with thanksgiving. This thanksgiving leads to an increase in gratitude, and this gratitude leads to an overflowing of pure joy.



Daily Reflection

Here I Am

“For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I will proclaim your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation (ἐν μέσῳ

ἐκκλησίας) I will praise you.’ And again, ‘I will put my trust in him.’ And again, ‘Here I am, and the children God has given me.’ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same (τῶν αὐτῶν), that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.” (Hebr 2: 11-18)

Christ is “not ashamed” to call us His “brethren” and “children.” He stands up in our midst, having “partaken” of our nature, our “flesh and blood,” in His incarnation, and says: “Here I am, and the children God has given Me.” He is “not ashamed” to stand up and be counted, as one of us.

Let me also not be ashamed, to stand up and be counted, as one of His. “Here I am, Lord,” I say to Him today, given to You, as one of Yours. I am no longer “nowhere,” floating about in meaninglessness and in purposeless, “lifelong bondage” to self-centered fear. Today I draw close to You, as You have drawn close to us, as I make my way toward Bethlehem, to share in Your flesh and blood, and in the vision of Your Nativity. “Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha! The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in her womb...” (Kontakion-hymn, Sunday before Nativity)



Archpastoral Letter for the Feast of the Nativity 2017

The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord
Dearly Beloved of Our Diocesan Family:
Christ is Born! – Let us glorify Him!

He lost nothing of the Godhead
and yet became my salvation.
The Healer stooped down to my unbearable pains.
He was mortal, yet God;
of the race of David, yet the maker of Adam;
He wore flesh, yet was beyond bodily form;
He had a Mother, yet she was a Virgin;
He was circumscribed, yet had not limit . . .
He came to the contest as a mortal,
but as the unconquerable One
He vanquished the Tempter. . .
He was sacrifice and celebrant,
sacrificial priest and God Himself.
He offered blood to God to cleanse the entire world.
The Cross lifted Him up
but it was the trap that nailed sin fast.
And yet how can I speak of all His works?

-- Poem 1.1.2., "On The Son," by St. Gregory Nazianzen

The coming of Our Lord into the world was not like the coming of a sightseer to a strange city. Rather, it was like an artist visiting his own studio, or an author paging through the books he himself has written. For in becoming incarnate, in taking on human flesh ... the Divine Word – the Second Person of the Holy Trinity – was tabernacling Himself in His own creation. As we read in the Gospel of Saint John: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Christ, in becoming human, had all the experiences that we have, except for sin. He experienced growing up: He had a Mother and a foster father, who watched Him take His first steps and heard Him say the alphabet and count and pray as a child. As a boy He played with other children and learned carpentry from St. Joseph, and participated in the services in the synagogue and in the Temple. As an adult He had the joys of helping others, casting out their demons and doubts, healing their bodies and souls of sickness, forgiving their sins, and even raising their dead.

On the other hand, in His life He experienced being hungry and thirsty, feeling fatigue and the need for rest. He felt the misery of people's pain and suffering and mourned the death of someone He loved. He was tempted by the evil one and rejected by men. He was criticized for the unique way He did things. He was called names and lied about, mocked and rejected and hated. He was dismissed from people's homes, cast out of synagogues, and expelled from cities. Ultimately He was betrayed and brought to unjust trials. He was imprisoned, scourged and crucified. He suffered the agony of death on the Cross. He experienced His body being laid in a tomb and His soul descending to Hades. To all of this, He surrendered Himself in order to be victorious over sin, the devil, and death – all for our salvation.

The message of Christmas is that the Incarnation of the Son of God, born this day in the flesh for our salvation, is as important for us today as it was for the world two thousand years ago. Ours is the God Who fully lived the human experience, such that when we pray to Him, especially in our trials and tribulations – our sicknesses and suffering – in the face of loneliness or pain, or death itself – He does not have to imagine what we are going through ... He only has to remember. And in remembering, He extends to us the healing, the forgiveness, the promise of eternal life that His love for mankind brought about when He became incarnate.

This Christmas, my prayer for you is that you and your loved ones will receive from Him all of the blessings and the joys that come from His hands ... and that you, in turn – by your improved prayer life, in more faithful reading of the Scriptures and attendance at divine services, and by your more regular reception of the Holy Mysteries – will come ever closer to the Incarnate God Who loves us more than we love ourselves.

With love in the Newborn Savior,
+*Michael*
Archbishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey