

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 Tone 5

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Troparion for the Feast in Tone 4

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshipped the stars, were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee!

Troparion of the Righteous Ones in Tone 2

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph, to David, the ancestor of God; you saw a Virgin great with child; you gave glory with the shepherds; you worshipped with the Magi; you received the news from the Angel. Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Kontakion of the Righteous Ones in Tone 3

Today godly David is filled with joy; Joseph and James offer praise. The glorious crown of their kinship with Christ fills them with great joy. They sing praises to the One ineffably born on earth, and they cry out: “O Compassionate One, save those who honor Thee!”

Kontakion of the Feast in Tone 3

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One. Angels with shepherds glorify Him; The wise men journey with the star, since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child.

SAINTS AND FEASTS OF THE DAY

DECEMBER 31, 2017

30TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. LEAVETAKING OF THE NATIVITY. SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY.



Sunday after the Nativity: Commemoration of the Holy Righteous David the King, Joseph the Betrothed, and James the Brother of the Lord

The Holy Prophet-King David, Saint Joseph the Betrothed, and Saint James the Brother of the Lord are commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, their commemoration is moved to December 26.

At an early date, some churches in the East began to commemorate certain important figures of the New Testament at the time of Theophany, and later during the Nativity season. In Syria, for example, Saint Stephen (December 27), Saints James (April 30) and John (September 26), and

Saints Peter and Paul (June 29) were commemorated near the end of December.

In Jerusalem, the saints mentioned above were combined with a feast that the Jews of Hebron celebrated on December 25 or 26 in honor of the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob. Later on, the Christians substituted Saint James (October 23) for Jacob, and then the commemoration of the Brother of the Lord became associated with his ancestor King David. In time, Saint Joseph was linked with Saints David and James.



Holy Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, along with David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord

Saint Joseph the Betrothed was of the lineage of King David. In his first marriage, he had four sons and two daughters. After he became a widower, Saint Joseph led a life of strict temperance. He was chosen to be the husband and guardian of the Most Holy Theotokos, who had taken a vow of virginity.

An angel told him of the Incarnation of the Son of God through her. Saint Joseph was present when the shepherds and the Magi worshiped the new-born divine Infant. On the orders of the angel, he fled into Egypt with the Mother of God and the Infant Jesus, saving them from the wrath of King Herod. He lived in Egypt with the Virgin Mary and the divine Child, working as a carpenter. Saint Joseph reputedly died at the age of one hundred.

Saint Joseph is commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, his Feast is moved to December 26. The Righteous

Joseph is also commemorated on the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers.



Holy Righteous David the King, Joseph the Betrothed, and James the Brother of the Lord

The Holy Prophet-King David was a forefather of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. The youngest son of Jesse, David shepherded a flock of sheep belonging to his father. He was distinguished by his deep faith, and he zealously fulfilled the will of God.

During a battle with the Philistines, he vanquished the giant Goliath in single combat, which decided the outcome of the war in favor of the Israelites. He endured many things from King Saul, who saw him as a favorite of the people and his rival. David, however, showed his own decency and magnanimity. Twice, when he had the possibility of killing Saul, he did not do so.

After Saul and his son perished, David was proclaimed king of the southern part of Israel, and after Saul's second son was killed, he became king of all Israel. He built a new capital, Jerusalem ("the City of Peace"), and a new tabernacle. His great wish to build a Temple was not realized. It was foretold to him that his son would build the Temple.

The life of the Prophet David was darkened by a grievous falling: he took Uriah's wife for himself, and sent Uriah to his death in battle. He was also an example of great repentance, humbly and with faith bearing the sorrows sent in punishment for his sins. Saint David gave a model for repentance in Psalm 50/51. King David died in great old age with steadfast faith in the coming of the promised Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. His divinely-inspired Psalter is widely used in the divine services and in personal prayers. (See the Books of Kings and Chronicles).

The holy Prophet-King David is invoked by those facing a difficult situation, such as an interview, etc.



Righteous James the Brother of the Lord, along with Joseph the Betrothed, and David the King

The Holy Apostle James, Brother of the Lord, was the eldest son of Joseph the Betrothed from his first marriage with Solomonia. The Apostle James is remembered after the Feast of the Nativity of Christ together with his father Joseph and the Prophet-King David, since he accompanied his family on the Flight into Egypt and lived there with the Infant Jesus, the Mother of God and Joseph. Later, he returned to Israel with them.

After the Ascension of the Lord, Saint James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, gaining the great esteem not only of Christians, but also of Jews. He was thrown from the roof of the Jerusalem Temple because he had publicly preached to the people about the God-Manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Apostle James is also commemorated on October 23.



Leavetaking of the Nativity of our Lord

Materials for the Leavetaking of the Nativity are taken from the service of the Feast day itself in the Menaion. The Scripture readings at Liturgy, however, are of the day, not of the Feast. The Prokeimenon, Alleluia verses, and Communion hymn are all of the Feast.



Venerable Melania the Younger of Rome

Saint Melania was born in Rome into a devout Christian family. Her parents, people of property and wealth, hoped that their daughter would marry and have children who would inherit their wealth.

At fourteen years of age Melania was married to the illustrious youth Apinianus. From the very beginning of their married life, Saint Melania asked her husband to live with her in chastity or else release her from the marriage. Apinianus answered, "I cannot agree to this right now. When we have two children to inherit the property, then we shall both renounce the world."

Soon Melania gave birth to a daughter, whom the young parents dedicated to God. Continuing to live together in marriage, Melania secretly wore a hairshirt and spent her nights in prayer. The second child, a boy, was premature and had severe complications. They baptized him, and he departed to the Lord.

Seeing the suffering of his wife, Apinianus asked the Lord to preserve Saint Melania's life, and he vowed to spend the rest of their life together in chastity. Recovering, Saint Melania stopped wearing her beautiful clothing and jewelry. Soon their daughter also died. The parents of Saint Melania did not support the young couple's desire to devote themselves to God. It was only when Saint Melania's father became deathly ill, that he asked their forgiveness and permitted them to follow their chosen path, asking them to pray for him.

The saints then left the city of Rome, and began a new life completely dedicated to the service of God. Apinianus at this time was twenty-four years of age, and Melania twenty. They began to visit the sick, to take in wanderers, and to help the indigent. They visited those who were exiled, and mine-convicts, and the destitute, there in debtor's prison. After selling their estates in Italy and Spain, they generously helped monasteries, hospitals, widows and orphans in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Phoenicia, and Palestine.

Many churches and hospitals were built with their assistance. Churches of both West and East benefited from them. Leaving their native land, they set sail for Africa, and a strong storm arose while they were at sea. The sailors said that this was because of the wrath of God, but Saint Melania said that it was not God's will that they should go directly to their destination.

The waves carried the ship to an island on which barbarians had landed. The besiegers demanded a ransom from the inhabitants, or else they threatened to lay waste the city. The saints supplied the necessary ransom, and thus saved the city and its people from destruction.

Resuming their voyage, they landed in Africa and helped all the needy there. With the blessing of the local bishops, they made offerings to churches and monasteries. During this time Saint Melania continued to humble her flesh by strict fasting, and she fortified her soul by constantly reading the Word of God, making copies of the sacred books and distributing them to those who lacked them. She sewed a hairshirt for herself, put it on, and continued to wear it.

The saints spent seven years in Carthage, and then decided to visit Jerusalem. At Alexandria, they were welcomed by the bishop, Saint Cyril, and they met in church with the holy Elder Nestorius, who was possessed of the gift of prophecy and healing. The Elder turned to them and told them to have courage and patience in expectation of the Glory of Heaven.

At Jerusalem, the saints distributed their remaining gold to the destitute and then spent their days in poverty and prayer. After a short visit to Egypt, where the saints visited many of the desert Fathers, Saint Melania secluded herself in a cell on the Mount of Olives. Only occasionally did she see Saint Apinianus.

Later, she founded a monastery, where eventually ninety virgins lived in obedience to Saint Melania. Out of humility, she would not consent to be abbess, and lived and prayed in solitude as before. In her instructions, Saint Melania urged the sisters to be vigilant and to pray, to disdain their own opinions and cultivate first of all love for God and for one another, to keep the holy Orthodox Faith, and to guard their purity of soul and of body.

In particular, she exhorted them to be obedient to the will of God. Calling to mind the words of the Apostle Paul, she counselled them to keep the fasts “not with wailing, nor from compulsion, but in virtuous disposition with love for God”. By her efforts an oratory and altar were built in the monastery, where they enshrined the relics of saints: the Prophet Zachariah, the holy Protomartyr Stephen, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. About this time Saint Apinianus fell asleep in the Lord. Saint Melania buried his relics and there spent another four years in fasting and unceasing prayer.

Saint Melania wanted to build a men’s monastery on the Mount of the Ascension of the Lord. The Lord blessed her intent by sending a benefactor who provided the means for the monastery. Joyfully accepting it, Saint Melania finished the great work in a single year. In this monastery, saintly men began to lift up unceasing prayer in the church of the Ascension of Christ.

Having completed her tasks, the saint left Jerusalem for Constantinople, hoping to save the soul of her pagan uncle Volusianus who had traveled there from Rome. Along the way she prayed at the relics of Saint Laurence (August 10), at the place of his martyrdom, and received auspicious signs. Arriving in Constantinople, the saint found her uncle had fallen ill. Her demeanor and her inspired discourses had a profound influence on the sick man. He gave up pagan impiety and died a Christian.

During this time many inhabitants of the capital were deceived by the heretical teaching of Nestorius. Saint Melania accepted anyone who turned to her for proper explanation, converting many of them to Orthodoxy. Many miracles were worked through the prayers of the saint.

Returning to her own monastery, the saint sensed the approach of death, and told this to the priest and the sisters. They listened to her final instructions with deep sorrow and with tears. Having asked their prayers and commanding them to preserve themselves in purity, she received the Holy Mysteries with joy. Saint Melania peacefully gave up her soul to the Lord in the year 439.

Venerable Cyriacus of Bisericani, Romania

Saint Cyriacus of Bisericani is one of Romania’s greatest ascetics, and in his life he was like the great Fathers of the Egyptian desert.

He lived in the Bisericani monastery at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which then had more than a hundred monks. Longing for a life of solitude, Saint Cyriacus went to live in a cave at Simon Mountain and remained there for sixty years.

Like Saint Onuphrius (June 12), Saint Cyriacus went about naked in summer and in winter, and his body became overgrown with hair. He glorified God with unceasing prayer and ascetical struggles, and Christ gave him the grace to overcome the demons which assailed him.

Attaining great holiness and perfecting himself in virtue, Saint Cyriacus fell asleep in the Lord in 1660. His relics were buried in his cave, where there is now a small chapel dedicated to him. Later, because of unsettled conditions in the land, the faithful took portions of his relics away in order to preserve them.

Venerable Cyriacus of Tazlau, Romania

Saint Cyriacus was born into a peasant family, and became a monk at the Tazlau Monastery. Since he surpassed the other monks in humility, prayer, and virtue, he was found worthy of the grace of the priesthood.

Wishing to attain further perfection, Saint Cyriacus withdrew to a mountain called Magura Tazlului, where he lived for fifty years. There he struggled in a manner similar to the great hesychasts of old, sustaining himself with dried bread and fruits, keeping all-night vigils and shedding copious tears. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, he was able to foresee future events, and to cast out evil spirits.

In time, many disciples flocked to him seeking spiritual counsel. These, in turn, became hesychasts and lived in the mountains of Tazlau, Nichitu, and Tarcau.

After he had reached a great age, Saint Cyriacus surrendered his soul to God around 1660. His disciples buried him in a cave on Magura Tazlului, and many miracles were worked through his holy relics.

At the end of the seventeenth century Moldavia was threatened by great dangers, and many people took refuge in the forests. The relics of Saint Cyriacus were divided among the faithful so that they would not be profaned by infidels. Thus, the mountain cave on Magura Tazlului was deprived of its great treasure.



St. Theophylactus of Ochrid

No information available at this time.

GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READINGS

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon, Tone 5:

Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever! (*Psalm 11:8*)
vs. Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly! (*Psalm 11:2*)

Prokeimenon, Tone 4 (Righteous Ones):

Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever! (*Psalm 11:8*)

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Galatians 1:11-19 (Sunday after the Nativity)

Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Alleluia, Tone 5:

I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation (*Psalm 88:2*)

vs. For Thou hast said: "Mercy will be established forever; My truth will be prepared in the heavens." (*Psalm 88:3*)

Alleluia, Tone 4 (Righteous Ones):

Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness! (*Psalm 131:1*)

Gospel Reading

The Reading is from Matthew 2:13-23 (Sunday after the Nativity)

When the wise men departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more." 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, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaos reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

PARISH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

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

Saturday, January 14th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, January 15th

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 21st

6:30 pm: Vespers

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

Be extremely careful not to offend anyone in word or deed, for it is a grave sin. When someone is offended, God, Who loves the man, is also offended, for there can be no offending man without offending God.

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

The Eternal Banquet

Preparing for the Divine Liturgy

That the Church requires us to prepare to receive the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ, prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, by saying the Pre-Communion Prayers, is a given. The Church also requires us to fast from midnight on, abstaining from either food or drink, until after we have received the Body and Blood of our Saviour. The only exception is when we must, because of health issues, eat or drink something, and this must be blessed by our confessor or priest.

Although not required, if we read the appointed Epistle and Gospel readings prior to entering into the Liturgy, the Word can better enter the heart, for when hearing God’s Word for the second time, we are more receptive, and the Word penetrates deeply.

Perhaps the most important preparation we must make before attending the Divine Liturgy, is to be sure we are at peace with all our brothers and sisters. We dare not approach the chalice with malice or hatred towards anyone, nor can we receive the Holy Gifts with a heart that has refused to forgive those who have hurt or offended us. An important part of forgiving others, is for us to seek forgiveness. Thus, frequent confession is an imperative.

Participating in the Divine Liturgy is a great privilege, for in this service we are entering into a place where there is neither time nor space, and where we are worshiping the Holy Trinity, together with the hosts of heaven.

In the Liturgy, we encounter God in a way that is beyond human comprehension, for we are invited to commune with our Creator in the most intimate way. To approach the Holy Mysteries (Communion) without thought, as though we were simply going to a movie, is beyond foolishness. To receive the “hot coals” that is meant to transform us, and make us whole, without proper preparation, is a very dangerous thing to do.



Daily Reflection

As God Forgave You



“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph 4: 30 – 5: 2)

It’s simple, even if it isn’t easy: Forgive one another, “as God in Christ forgave you.” Why isn’t it easy? Because deep inside we often don’t believe, or don’t accept, the simple fact that God already forgave us, in Christ.

But let me accept this simple word today, and embrace it, like a loving and beloved child of a loving God: “Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...” Let me give myself up today, for Him and through Him, and also give up pointless battles against God’s will and love for me and others. Let me let myself be kind, to myself and others today, in God’s grace. Thy kingdom come, Lord, into my morning today, as You see fit.

The Feast of the Circumcision: A Blessed New Year!



The Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America will be closed on Monday, January 1, 2018 in observance of the Feast of the Circumcision, the Feast of Saint Basil the Great and the beginning of the civil new year.

It was on the eighth day after His Nativity that our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised in accordance with the Old Testament Law. All male infants underwent circumcision as a sign of God’s Covenant with the holy Forefather Abraham and his descendants [Genesis 17:10-14, Leviticus 12:3].

After this ritual, the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, as the Archangel Gabriel had declared on the day of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos [Luke 1:31-33, 2:21]. The Fathers of the Church explain that the Lord, the Creator of the Law, underwent circumcision in order to give people an example of how faithfully the divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord was

circumcised so that later no one would doubt that He had truly assumed human flesh, and that His Incarnation was not merely an illusion, as certain heretics had taught.

In the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision gave way to the Mystery of Baptism, which it prefigured [Colossians 2:11-12]. Accounts of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord continue in the Eastern Church right up through the fourth century. The Canon of the Feast was written by Saint Stephen of the Saint Sava Monastery.

In addition to circumcision, which the Lord accepted as a sign of God's Covenant with mankind, He also received the Name Jesus [Savior] on the eighth day after His Nativity as an indication of His service, the work of the salvation of the world [Matthew 1:21; Mark 9:38-39, 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Philippians 2:9-10]. These two events—the Lord's circumcision and naming—remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant with God and “are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” [Colossians 2:11]. The very name “Christian” is a sign of mankind's entrance into a New Covenant with God.

