

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM



December 30, 2018 – Afterfeast of Nativity | Sunday After Nativity | Sunday Before Theophany | Virgin-martyr Anyisia

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.

On December 30, the Afterfeast of the Nativity, let us offer thanks to Christ our God, Who is born of a Virgin for our salvation. As the days begin to grow longer, we recall that the Lord is also called the Sun of Righteousness, and enlightens those who were in darkness. At this season of the year the daylight increases, and we remember the words of Saint John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

The Holy Virgin Martyr Anysia lived in the city of Thessalonica during the reign of the the co-Emperor Maximian (286-305). Upon the death of her parents, who had raised her in Christian piety, Saint Anysia sold everything she owned, distributing her riches to the poor, and she began to lead a strict life of fasting, vigil, and prayer.

During his persecution against Christians, Maximian issued an edict stating that anyone had the right to kill Christians with no fear of punishment. Soon there were many bodies to be found in cities, towns, and by the roadside. Once, when Saint Anysia was on her way to church, a pagan soldier stopped her and demanded that she come along to the festival of the sun to offer sacrifice. Saint Anysia gently pulled herself away from him. When the soldier boldly grabbed her and attempted to tear the veil from her head, she shoved him, spit in his face and said, “My Lord Jesus Christ forbids you!” In anger, the soldier ran her through with his sword. Those gathering over her body wept and loudly complained against the cruel emperor for issuing an edict that resulted in the death of many innocent people. Christians buried the martyr near the city gates, and a chapel was built over her grave. *(from oca.org)*

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians 1:11-19

Brethren, I make known to you that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.



Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 2:13-23

At that time, when the magi had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.” Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Since having given birth to the incarnate God [Mary] is called Theotokos. Thence springs praise of the Theotokos, wherefore she is Theotokos and is so named. What topic is more sublime than she is? None that can be thought of between the divine and the human. For it is not easy to conceive and speak of God; rather, it is altogether impossible. Similarly, the great mystery of the Theotokos is above both understanding and language. – Basil of Seleucia

Theophany Service Schedule

We will serve the Royal Hours at 8:00 AM Friday, Jan. 4. We will celebrate the Great Blessing of Waters in conjunction with Vespers at 5:30 PM Saturday, Jan. 5. We will celebrate Theophany with Matins and Divine Liturgy at the usual times on Sunday.



Office of the Bishop
312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906

CHRISTMAS ARCHPASTORAL LETTER
December 25, 2018 / January 7, 2019

Protocol No. 21/2018

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you with joy and love in the Name of our Incarnate Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us give thanks to Almighty God, by whose grace we have been given the opportunity to celebrate the Birth of His Son.

If we look around, we find hatred, mistrust, suffering, and the absence of peace and love in our homes, neighborhoods, cities, country, and in fact the whole world. This reality in life makes us cry out for God's help, assistance, and intervention.

My beloved ones, despite all the suffering, sorrow and injustice in our world, today joy and hope comes to us once more. That's why at this blessed time of the year we look forward to the arrival of the new born King.

Therefore let us celebrate the miracle of His Birth. Let kindness come with every gift. Let compassion, forgiveness and love come with every greeting. Let our hearts be filled with prayer, charity, and reconciliation for one another.

May all of us, Priests, Panis, Deacons, Sub-Deacons, Readers, Archons, Parish Officers, Parishioners (young and old), Friends and Supporters of the God-protected American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese experience the joy and wonders of the Shepherds and the awe and respect of the Three Wise Men at the arrival of the Messiah, our new born King. Christ is Born!

Greetings from Johnstown with much love,

+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

To be read as the sermon and distributed in all the churches of the Diocese at the Divine Liturgy on the Feast Day of the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Archiepiscopal Encyclical for the Nativity of Christ

“And His name shall be called the Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ according to the Flesh is depicted throughout our churches in the familiar and radiant icon of the Nativity. Every element of the Gospel account, historically and theologically, appears before our eyes to inspire wonder, worship, and peace. In every detail, the icon proclaims without words that the Child born this day in Bethlehem is none other than *the Prince of Peace*. For by His birth, peace entered into a world plagued by hatred, hurt, and conflict.

Our Lord came to bring *peace between heaven and earth*. We see this depicted in the shepherds as they hearken to the voice of an angel. The Evangelist Luke tells us that they were *greatly frightened* at the angel’s appearance (Luke 2:9). But in the icon their faces manifest reverence and attention, not terror or guilt. As the great company of the heavenly host chanted *Glory to God in the highest*, the shepherds received and believed their message of *Peace on earth, goodwill towards mankind* (Luke 2:14). In that peace they journeyed to Bethlehem to seek the Child of promise. There, the shepherds witnessed God’s answer to sin and death, as forgiveness, reconciliation, and life shone forth from the cave in the face of the Prince of Peace.

Our Lord came also to bring *peace among the peoples of the earth*. We see this depicted in the figures of the Magi. The Evangelist Matthew tells us that these astrologers from the East followed the rising of a star (Matthew 2:2) and left their homes, traversing for many months and long miles to reach the place where the newborn King dwelt. The Magi came in peace, bearing gifts in order to honor the newborn Messiah, even as the prophets had foretold: *Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn* (Isaiah 60:3).

Our Lord came to bring *peace within the realm of nature*. We see this depicted in the animals who kneel in worship before the manger. Strange wonders happen before them; unfamiliar visitors crowd their stable. But the animals neither cower nor flee; they calmly remain to witness the miracle. *The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his Master’s manger*, as was foretold again by Isaiah (1:3). For so many millennia, the story of human development has been a history of cruelty towards animals; but on this night, and by Christ’s birth, there was serenity and peace.

Our Lord came to bring *peace to our fallen human nature*, beset by weakness and mortality. In the center of the icon we behold the Virgin Mother bowed down in adoration before her Son and God. She shows no hint of pain or trauma, even after a long journey and childbirth. For with His entrance into this world, Jesus Christ came only to heal and save, not to harm or destroy. He caused His mother no injury in His birth. In her immaculate body, the destiny for all humanity is revealed: health, restoration, and resurrection. Already at His Nativity, the icon declares, *Christ is the master of life and death, and in Him is the ancient curse abolished* (cf. Genesis 3:16). *The Prince of Peace will destroy the final enemy, which is death* (1 Cor. 15:26).

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

We glorify the Prince of Peace by spreading the peace He granted to us in His Birth. In this Christmas season—as we gather with family and friends, as we worship in the house of the Lord, as we break bread and share the bounties of our lives—let us also strive to be people of peace.

Out of the stable of Bethlehem, peace from heaven shines forth: let us therefore be quick to forgive and ready to reconcile with all those around us. From the lowly manger in Judea, peace prevails over man and beast: let us therefore be diligent as faithful stewards of God’s creation, neither exploiting nor misusing His gifts through overconsumption, materialism, or waste. Through the gifts of the Magi, peace for all peoples is foretokened: let us therefore through almsgiving and generosity be strong advocates of justice, equality, and compassion. From the face of the Holy Theotokos, peace overflows, royal and radiant: let us therefore embrace purity and complete dedication to Christ in our minds and bodies and spirits, giving glory to the Prince of Peace who came to save us.

May the peace, good will, and glory of the Christmas season be yours today and always, and unto the ages of ages. **“Christ is Born! Glorify Him!”**

With paternal love and heartfelt wishes
in the Incarnate Lord,

† **DEMETRIOS**

Archbishop of America



Patriarchal Proclamation of Christmas (2018).

Prot. No. 1099

PATRIARCHAL PROCLAMATION FOR CHRISTMAS

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

By God's Mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church Grace, Mercy and Peace from the Savior Christ Born in Bethlehem

* * *

Venerable brothers and beloved children in the Lord,

We glorify the Most-Holy and All-Merciful God, that we are again deemed worthy this year to reach the festive day of Christmas, the feast of the pre-eternal Son and Word of God's Incarnation "for us and for our salvation." Through the "eternal mystery" and "great miracle" of the divine Incarnation, the "great wound," namely humankind sitting in darkness and shadow, is rendered into "children of light and day,"¹ while the blessed road of deification by grace is opened for us. In the theandric mystery of the Church and through her holy sacraments, Christ is born and takes shape in our soul and existence. Maximus the Confessor theologizes that "the Word of God, though born once in the flesh, is ever willing to be born spiritually in those who desire Him. Thus, He becomes an infant and fashions Himself in us by means of the virtues; indeed, He reveals Himself to the extent that we are capable of receiving Him."² God is not an abstract "idea," like the god of the philosophers, or an unapproachable God enclosed in absolute transcendence. He is "Emmanuel," "God with us,"³ closer to us than we are to ourselves, "more akin to us than our very own selves."⁴

Faith in the inaccessible and fleshless Divinity does not transform our life; it does not remove the polarization between matter and spirit; nor does it bridge the gap between heaven and earth. The Incarnation of the Divine Word is the revelation of truth regarding God and humankind, which saves the human race from the dark labyrinths of materialism and anthropomorphism, as well as from idealism and dualism. The Church's condemnation of nestorianism and monophysitism signals the rejection of two broader tendencies of the human soul: on the one hand rendering anthropocentrism absolute, and on the other idolizing an idealistic understanding of life and truth, both of which are especially widespread deviations in our age.

Contemporary “nestorianism” is expressed as a spirit of secularization, as scientism and the absolute prioritization of utilitarian knowledge, as the absolute autonomy of economy, as self-saving arrogance and atheism, as the “non-civilization” of individualism and eudemonism, as legalism and moralism, as the “end of decency” and identification of sacrificial love and repentance with the so-called “morality of the weak.” By the same token, “monophysitism” is today represented by tendencies to demonize the body and natural man, by puritanism and the syndromes of “purity,” by fruitless introverted spirituality and various mysticisms, by disregarding the intellect, art and civilization, by denying dialogue and rejecting differences, with the dangerous expresser—supposedly in the name of the “one and only truth”—namely a religious fundamentalism nurtured by absolutism and rejections, while feeding violence and division. It is evident that both a nestorianizing deification of the world and a monophysitizing demonization of it leave the world and history, civilizations and cultures, exposed to the powers of the “present age,” cementing their autonomy and impasses.

Christian faith is the certainty of our salvation by the God of love, who graciously assumed our nature and once again granted us “the likeness” lost through the fall, making us worthy of true life in His Body, the Church. The theandric mystery is expressed throughout the entirety of life in the Church. The Incarnate Savior received “the flesh of the Church”⁵ and showed, “first and alone,” “the true man, who is perfect on account of both character and life as well as all other aspects.”⁶ The Church of Christ is the place of “common salvation,” “common freedom” and hope in the “common kingdom.” It is the way of living the liberating truth, the core of which is expressing the truth in love. This love transcends the boundaries of mere human action, because its source and prototype lie in divine philanthropy, which transcends human reason. “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us ... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”⁷ God is present wherever love exists.

This saving truth must also be expressed in the way we celebrate the sacred Nativity of our Savior, who visited us from on high. A feast is always a “fullness of time,” a time of self-knowledge, of thanksgiving for the magnitude of divine philanthropic love, of witness to the truth of the theandric mystery and of freedom in Christ. The Christ-pleasing celebration of the Divine Word’s Incarnation is an act of resistance against secularization, against discoloration of the feast and its conversion into a “Christmas without Christ,” as well as against a celebration of Having, of consumerism and vanity—indeed, into a world filled with social tensions, reversal and confusion of values, of violence and injustice, where the

“Jesus child” is once again faced with the inexorable interests of numerous, multifaceted powers.

Honorable brothers and beloved children,

Generations come and pass, while forthcoming developments are difficult to foresee. Genuine faith, though, does not face dilemmas. The Word became flesh, the “truth has come” and “darkness has subsided.” We already participate in the Kingdom while still on our journey toward the completion of the incarnate Divine Economy. We possess the unshakeable certainty that the future belongs to Christ, Who is “the same yesterday and today and forever;”⁸ that the Church of Christ is and shall remain a place of holiness and godliness, a renewal of man and world, a foretaste of the glory of the Kingdom; that it will continue “to give the witness of the Gospel” “to distribute the gifts of God in the world: His love, peace, justice, and reconciliation, the power of resurrection and expectation of eternity.”⁹ The contemporary ideology of some “post-Christian” age is baseless. “After Christ,” everything is and remains “in Christ” to the ages.

We humbly kneel before the Divine Infant of Bethlehem and His All- Holy Mother, who holds Him in her arms, while venerating the Incarnate “most perfect God,” and bestow upon the children of the Holy and Great Church of Christ throughout the world—from the ever-vigilant Phanar—our Patriarchal blessing for the Holy Twelve Days of Christmas, wishing you a healthy, fruitful and joyous new year in the Lord’s favor.

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople

Your fervent supplicant before God



January Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries:

George & Voula Chrisovergis 16th
Mark & Karen Blaydoe 18th



Birthdays:

Amira Madison 3 rd	Luke Connour 3 rd	Addison Robinson 3 rd
Anne Rosario 13 th	Andrew McNeil 17 th	Dana Dewey 22 nd
Benjamin Sacksen 27 th	Katerina Dewey 29 th	Anastasia Kopan 29 th

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Domieniecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)