

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

Troparion of St. John the Baptist

*The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise
But the Lord's testimony is enough for thee O Forerunner
For thou was shown to be more wonderful than the prophets
Since thou was granted to baptize Him whom thou didst proclaim
Then having endured great suffering for the truth
Thou didst rejoice to bring even to those in hell the good tidings
That God who has appeared in the flesh
Takes away the sins of the world
And grants us great mercy.*

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church
4718 E. Horsehaven Ave
Post Falls, Idaho 83854-6668
www.stjohnorthodox.org



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Church Website: <http://www.stjohnorthodox.org>

Send announcements for the bulletin and/or website to bulletin@stjohnorthodox.org

Send announcements to be emailed to all members to announce@stjohnorthodox.org

The Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ December 25, 2011



Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city's inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

"I behold a strange and most glorious mystery," the Church sings with awe, "Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid." (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three shepherds watching their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord (St Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magi by a wondrous star. St John Chrysostom and St Theophylactus, commenting on St Matthew's Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was "a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star." St Demetrius of Rostov says it was a "manifestation of divine energy" (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi "fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt. 2:11).

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES & EVENTS

Saturday, December 24 – Daily Orthros for the Paramon of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord 9:00am; Divine Liturgy for the Paramon of the Feast (St. John Chrysostom) 9:30am; Great Vespers of the Nativity 6:00pm

Sunday, December 25 – **THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST** Festal Orthros of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord 9:00am; Festal Divine Liturgy of the Feast of the Nativity (St. Basil) 10:00am

Wednesday, December 28 – Vespers 6:00pm

Saturday, December 31 – Great Vespers of the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord & of Feast of St. Basil the Great 6:00pm

Sunday, January 1 – **Circumcision of our Lord and Feast of St. Basil** - Orthros 9:00am; Divine Liturgy 10:00am

EPISTLE READERS

December 25 - Reader Mark Fellegly

January 1 – Tabitha Townsend

January 8 – Joy Corey

CHURCH CLEANING

Week of Dec 26- Townsends

Week of Jan 2 - Fellegly/Holman

Week of Jan 9 - Corey/Rush

LUNCHEON & CLEANUP

December 25 - Nativity - No Lunch

January 1 – Team 3 - Garbinski, Tourous, Weddle, Ayres, O'Daniel

January 9 – Team 4 - Townsend, Rush, Calderoni, Sanman, Stillman

PRAYERS FOR THE LIVING:

Shirley Jenkin, Paul Truebenbach, Jean (Fr. Basil's mother), Jim Ayres, Mike Kerr, Tim Peterson's grandfather, Bob Rutherford, Ed Mattmiller, Sarah Riccio, Cameron (son of Michelle Parge), Jon Paul, Bobby Clark (friend of the Olinger's), Karen Kares, Emmet (friend of Nanette's), James Bentley (Bryne's grandfather), Bob (Owen's father), Baby Girl Sunny Fox & mother Tiffany, Terri (Dianne Nolan's sister), Katrina (Mike Kerr's wife), Rita & Kent Little (friends of Trudy Olinger), Bonnie (Jenny Dancy's mother), Lou Papachristos (friend of Karen Karres), Teri Hundt (sister of Tiffany Gallatin), Inna Epling, Moses Kemper, Pam, Susan, Marc (Jenny Dancy's sister-in-law and friends), Crystal, Riley, Emily, Boston, Caleb, Nancy Corey (Ed Corey's sister), Jamie Landers, Nikolai Kupcow, George Kucera.

PRAYERS FOR THE DEPARTED:

Fr. Michael Lewis, Fr Basil Steiger, Fr. Thomas O'Dea, Charlotte, Carla Scherer (Hannah's grandmother), Bill Goolsby (Steve's father), Wisdom Gonzalez (Bartimaeus' cousin), Nina Bergoltseva, John Schrom Sr. (father of Sbdn. John Schrom). William Brisbane (Nanette's father), Jack and Steve (Dianne Nolan's father and brother-in-law), Dominic & Pasquale (brother and brother-in-law of Lucille Horton), Milic Milojevic, Wilma Young (Steve Wood's mother), Vasso Papachristos.

SPECIAL NEEDS LIST (WISH LIST)

- 12 foot stepladder

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Post-Christmas/pre-Epiphany/birthday party at Thomas Craffey's home 12/30/11

Christ is in our midst! Our brother in Christ Thomas Craffey is having a party and is inviting everyone in the parish. Per Thomas:

I am planning on having a post-Christmas/pre-Epiphany/birthday party at my house on Friday the 30th of this month starting at 5:00 pm. All in the parish are invited. Whoever is planning to come will need to RSVP me no later than the 27th, either through the new email address, Tridaro@gmail.com, or my phone #, which is: 509 209 1767.

Thanks! In Christ,
Thomas

Iconography Workshop, January 23-27

St. John's will be hosting an Iconography workshop, taught by Eleni Schumacher & Dianne Nolan the week of January 23rd through the 27th. Please register early, as space is limited. To register, contact Dianne at 208-667-2222.

2012 Pan-Orthodox Youth Winter Retreat - Jan. 14-16, 2012

Pan-Orthodox Youth Retreat

The Pan-Orthodox Youth Retreat is coming up soon! To join the fun, mail in your registration forms by **Dec. 30** (no registration forms will be accepted after that date). Volunteers are still needed. If finances are an issue please talk to your priest today after the service; scholarships may be available.

Thank you,
Pan-Orthodox Youth Ministry Team

Theme: "Know your Faith, Share your Faith" - 2012 Pan-Orthodox Youth Winter Retreat

Where: Cedar Springs Camp in Lake Stevens, WA (Western WA)

What: Friends, games, rock climbing, laser tag, swing & Greek dancing, "Fire on Father", discussions, worship, talent show, skits,

When: Jan. 14-16, 2012

Why: To gather together for fellowship and to foster spiritual growth.

Who: Junior (7th & 8th grade) and senior high school age youth

Guest Speaker: Fr. Photios

How: Fill out registration forms available at your church or online at www.stpaulorthodox.org/registration.pdf

Volunteers: Fill out registration forms available at your church or online at www.stpaulorthodox.org/volunteer.pdf

Cost: \$135,

Questions: Leteris Sitaris lsitaras@saintdemetrios.com or Nia Chopelas 360 435-6264

The present Feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, "Brethren, observe the feasts; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month." In another place it also says, "Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world."

In the second century St Clement of Alexandria also indicates that the day of the Nativity of Christ is December 25. In the third century St Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of St Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia (December 28) were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church. There is evidence of this in the works of St Ephraim the Syrian, St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Ambrose of Milan, St John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church of the fourth century.

St John Chrysostom, in a sermon which he gave in the year 385, points out that the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is ancient, and indeed very ancient. In this same century, at the Cave of Bethlehem, made famous by the Birth of Jesus Christ, the empress St Helen built a church, which her mighty son Constantine adorned after her death. In the Codex of the emperor Theodosius from 438, and of the emperor Justinian in 535, the universal celebration of the day of the Nativity of Christ was decreed by law. Thus, Nicephorus Callistus, a writer of the fourteenth century, says in his History that in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian established the celebration of the Nativity of Christ throughout all the world.

Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople in the fifth century, Sophronius and Andrew of Jerusalem in the seventh, Sts John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maium and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople in the eighth, the Nun Cassiane in the ninth, and others whose names are unknown, wrote many sacred hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which are still sung by the Church on this radiant festival.

During the first three centuries, in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Cyprus, the Nativity of Christ was combined together with the Feast of His Baptism on January 6, and called "Theophany" ("Manifestation of God"). This was because of a belief that Christ was baptized on anniversary of His birth, which may be inferred from St John Chrysostom's sermon on the Nativity of Christ: "it is not the day on which Christ was born which is called Theophany, but rather that day on which He was baptized."

In support of such a view, it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23) when He was baptized. The joint celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Theophany continued to the end of the fourth century in certain Eastern Churches, and until the fifth or sixth century in others.

The present order of services preserves the memory of the ancient joint celebration of the Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany. On the eve of both Feasts, there is a similar tradition that one should

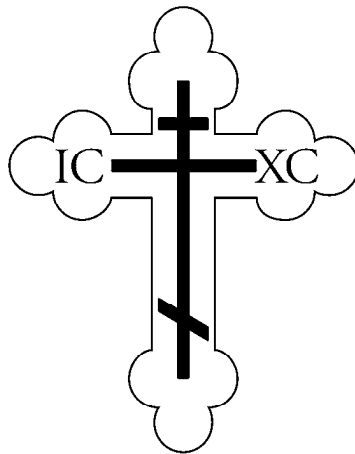
fast until the stars appear. The order of divine services on the eve of both feastdays and the feastdays themselves is the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world. The angel said to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, glorifying God and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Those who heard these things were astonished at what the shepherds told them concerning the Child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:10-20).

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is a cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind, "for the Savior is Born!"

Concurring with the witness of the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, in their God-inspired writings, describe the Feast of the Nativity of Christ as most profound, and joyous, serving as the basis and foundation for all the other Feasts.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



APOLYTIKION OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST IN TONE FOUR

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars did learn therefrom to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest Thou didst come. O Lord, glory to Thee.

KONTAKION OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST IN TONE THREE

Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent in essence; the earth offereth the cave to the unapproachable One; the angels with the shepherds glorify Him; and the Magi with the star travel on their way; for a new child hath been born for our sakes, God before the ages.

THE EPISTLE

Let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. Shout with joy to God, all the earth.

The reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians. (4:4-7)

Brethren, when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

THE GOSPEL

The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (2:1-12)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, are by no means least among the rulers of Judea; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern My people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.