



Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

Tuesday, December 25, 2019
Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ



Hymns for Today's Service

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!

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!

Epistle Reading - Galatians 4:4-7

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

Gospel Reading - Matthew 2:1-12

Now after 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 when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

TODAY: 9 AM Divine Liturgy for Nativity of our Lord
DECEMBER 26TH, 9 AM - Divine Liturgy for 2nd Day of the Feast & Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos

NEXT WEEK:

SAT, DEC 28TH - 4 pm Great Vespers
SUN, DEC 29TH, 9 AM - Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour, Adult Education (Intro to Divine Liturgy)
TUES, DEC 31ST, 6 PM - Vespers Divine Liturgy for Circumcision and St. Basil the Great

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

To the Honorable Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and Pious Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, My Beloved Brethren and Blessed Children in the Lord, As we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ in the flesh, and His baptism in the River Jordan, we call to mind the important roles that his mother, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and his Forerunner, John the Baptist, had in bringing about these events that manifested Christ to the world. For the Theotokos and the Baptist are indeed excellent examples for us, as we share their same calling to make Christ present in the world.

When Mary received the glad tidings that she was to become the Birth-giver of God, she humbly responded: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to thy word.” She then visited her relative Elizabeth, who was six months pregnant, and when she greeted Elizabeth, the babe in Elizabeth’s womb leaped for joy. This babe, as we well know, was Saint John the Baptist, the Forerunner of Christ.

The importance of John the Baptist in the Gospels cannot be overemphasized. As the Forerunner of Christ, he not only proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, but also died a martyr’s death for speaking the truth, foreshadowing that Christ, the Truth, would die for the Salvation of the world. In dying for the truth, John is not only the Forerunner to Christ, but also the Forerunner to all those who have died for Christ throughout the centuries, the countless martyrs who have struggled and been slain for Christ for more than two thousand years. Some Christians are still called to this level of witness, to this level of dying in martyrdom for the sake of Christ. The twentieth century saw more Christian martyrs than any century beforehand, in places such as Russia, Romania, and Turkey. The twenty-first in turn is seeing many Christian martyrs in places like Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Syria. We pray for strength and steadfastness for all Christians suffering persecution for the sake of Christ, and in turn we ask for the intercessions of those who have died martyr’s deaths in witness of Christ.

Yet certainly, not all Christians are called to be slain for Christ, to be beheaded like John the Baptist or many of the later martyrs. Neither are all called to be like the Baptist as public preachers or wandering ascetics. For those who do not have the Baptist’s calling, another route is provided: the calling to live like the Virgin Mary. For while John made Christ known to the world, it was

through the Virgin Mary that Christ came to be born in the flesh. She is the Theotokos, the bearer of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the same way, Christians can “bear Christ” and make Him present. Instead of preaching God’s works across hills and dales, we can keep them close and ponder them in our hearts (see Luke 2:19). By thus meditating on God’s works, we will become authentically humble, gentle, and kind like Mary. And in this process of contemplating what Christ has done for us, we will gain boldness before Him in our private conversations with Him. Forging a personal relationship with Christ, we will have boldness to ask Him and His servants for what is needed, just as Mary His Mother did at the wedding in Cana.

These two great figures, John the Baptist and Mary the Theotokos, thus help us grapple with a perennial problem of Christians: how do we keep the winter feasts of the Nativity and Theophany meaningful throughout the year? The Church’s calendar points us to the solution: the day after the Nativity of the Lord, December 26, is dedicated to the Lord’s Mother, and January 7, the day after the Theophany of the Lord, is dedicated to the Lord’s Forerunner. Hence the Church tells us that imitation of the Forerunner and the Theotokos are the keys to making Christ’s winter feasts more than just a few days of celebration. The Baptist shows us the way of outward witness, of forceful and defiant objection to the falsehood propagated in the world, while the Theotokos shows us the way of inner stillness, of contemplation of the mystery of Christ. And Christians can imitate the lifestyle of either one, because ultimately both John and the Theotokos are doing the same thing: both are witnesses to Christ, and steadfastly remain eternal witnesses to His death and resurrection.

*So, give glory to Christ on the feasts of His Nativity and Theophany, while honoring and magnifying in song the Theotokos and Mother of the Light, and praising the Baptist as is his due. For they reveal to us the different ways in which Christians can witness to Christ, and are our primary examples of how to live a Christian life, not only at this festal season of Nativity and Theophany, but throughout the entire year.
Christ is born! Glorify Him!*

With love in the New-Born Christ,

+ TIKHON

Abp of Washington, Met of All America and Canada