

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Orthodox Church of America

A Parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

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December 20, 2020

28th Sunday after Pentecost - 1st John 1:1-9

Sunday before the Nativity

- 9:10 am - Hours
- 9:30 am - Divine Liturgy
Heb. 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40
Matt. 1:1-225

Schedule of Services

Tuesday, December 22

- 7:00 pm - Akathist to Saint John, Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord.

Thursday, December 24

- 4:00 pm - Nativity Vigil

Friday, December 25

*Nativity of our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ*

- 9:10 - Hours
- 9:30 - Divine Liturgy.

Saturday, December 26

Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos

- 9:10 - Hours
- 9:30 - Divine Liturgy.

Sunday, December 27

Protomartyr Stephen

- 9:10 - Hours
- 9:30 - Divine Liturgy.

WEEKLY BIBLE MESSAGE

The Feast of the Nativity of Jesus is one of the most joyful days of the Orthodox Church. It ranks next to the greatest holiday, the Resurrection of Jesus. The Feast of the Birth of Jesus is also known as the "Incarnation of Christ." This means that Jesus became a man and came into the world to save us. We also refer to this joyous feast as Christmas.

The story of the Nativity of Christ is beautifully told in the Holy Scriptures.

As the story is told by the Apostles, the Roman Empire was powerful. The Romans had conquered much of the then known world. Judea and Samaria, what we know today as Israel, were included in their conquests. Emperor Augustus ordered that a census be taken in all his lands. He needed to know how many people lived in the empire so he could tax them. Everyone had to go to the town of their family's origin to register for the census. This meant that Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. They were descendants of King David and Bethlehem was the City of David.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and it was a great distance from Bethlehem. It was about 100 miles over very rugged roads. Moreover, Mary was expecting the baby and it was almost time for her to give birth. Bethlehem was a small town and there were many descendants of David who had come to register for the census. By the time Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem there was no place for them to stay. Joseph tried very hard to find a place to sleep that evening. There was no room at the inn. Finally, Joseph found a cave-like place where they could rest. This place was used by shepherds to protect their sheep in stormy weather. It was here that Mary gave birth to Jesus. The baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the straw in the manger.

Now, that night the shepherds were out in the fields guarding their sheep. Suddenly, there was a bright light which startled the shepherds. The light was so bright that it turned the night into daylight. Of course, the shepherds were frightened. Nothing such as this had ever happened. Soon an angel appeared and calmed them. The angel 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; which 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" (Luke 2:11-12). Then a larger group of angels appeared. They praised and glorified God and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). When the angels finished singing, they disappeared and the light began to fade. The shepherds were awed. They didn't know what to do. Finally, they decided to leave their flocks of sheep and go to Bethlehem. They decided that they wanted to see for themselves what the angels had told them. When they got to Bethlehem, they found Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. They fell to their knees and adored Jesus. Some Wise Men came from the East for they knew of the coming of Jesus. They had seen a star that told them that a new king had been born to the Jews. They followed the star and were looking for the child. At this time the governor of Judea was King Herod. He was a wicked man and was feared and hated by the people. When Herod heard about the Wise Men looking for the child, he invited them to his palace. Herod asked the Wise Men to find the child so that he, too, could worship Him. But Herod was lying. He did not want anyone to take his place. The Wise Men went on to look for Jesus. The Star led them to Jesus and Mary. When the Wise Men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshipped Him. They gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Wise Men left but did not return to Herod. They had a dream that warned them that Herod wanted to harm Jesus. Instead, they returned to their native country by a different route.

Intercessory Prayers

Please keep in your prayers our Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Genevieve Bobenko, Barbara Bogart, Michael Bzik, Mary Ann Dolak, Dorothy Fabian, Barbara Kary, Margaret Kovalycsik, Kathleen Lazarczyk, Dennis Maixner, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakoz, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Patricia Galley.

Our Parish Life

♦ The Department of Youth Ministry is sponsoring a Virtual Winter Retreat for Teens in Grades 7-12 on Wednesday, December 30, 2020. There is no fee to participate. The day will begin at 11:30 AM EST and be split into two sessions (11:30am-2:30pm and 6:30-8:30pm). Teens may register at www.nynjoca.org (Virtual Winter Retreat) until December 29th. Please note that a link to the live session will be sent out closer to December 30th.

♦ Holy Synod approved the decision of the Metropolitan Council to **postpone the 20th All-American Council** from July 2021 until July 2022. The Metropolitan Council and the Holy Synod took this decision due the uncertainties related to the present public health crisis.

♦ **Wall Calendars** for 2021 are available in the narthex. Please take one per household. Many thanks to the Bizub Quinlan Funeral Home for sponsoring 2021 calendars.

♦ **Church donation envelopes** for 2021 are available in the candle room. Please pick up your set and continue to support our parish, that does rely on your support! May the Lord bless you hundredfold for your generosity!

