



St Nicholas Orthodox Church

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Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Христос рождается! Славите его!

December 25, 2009

The Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ

First Antiphon (Psalm 112)

I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: I will make all Thy wonders known.

R. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

In the company of the upright, in the congregation, great are the works of the Lord! *R*

They are studied by all who have pleasure in them. *R*

His work is glory and beauty, and His righteousness endures forever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. *R*

Second Antiphon (Psalm 112)

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments!

R. O Son of God born of the Virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!

His descendants will be mighty in the land. The generation of the upright will be blessed! *R*

Glory and wealth are in His house, and His righteousness endures forever! *R*

Light rises in the dark for the upright; the Lord is merciful, compassionate and righteous. *R*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. *R*

Third Antiphon (Psalm 110)

The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool!"

R. Troparion of the Feast

The Lord sends forth from Zion Thy mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of Thy foes. *R*

Authority shall be with Thee on the day of Thy power, among the splendor of Thy holy ones! *R*

Tone 4

Troparion of the Feast

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!

Tone 3

Kontakion of the Feast

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!

In Place of 'Holy God' (Galatians 3:27)

As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!

Tone 8

Prokeimenon of the Feast (Psalm 65:4)

Let all the earth worship Thee and praise Thee; let it praise Thy name, O Most High!

Epistle of the Feast (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 of the Feast (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.

Hymn to the Theotokos

Magnify, O my soul, the most pure virgin Theotokos, more honorable than the heavenly hosts!

I behold a strange most glorious mystery:

Heaven – the cave!

The cherubic throne – the Virgin!

The manger – the place where Christ lay!

The uncontainable God whom we magnify in song!

Communion Hymn (Psalm 111:9)

The Lord hath sent redemption to His people. Alleluia!

*While Holy Communion is reserved for practicing Orthodox Christians
who prepare themselves by prayer and fasting,
non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross
and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

We rejoice in the coming of the Savior, the Advent of the Son of God into this broken world. His Nativity anticipates and prefigures His Second and Glorious Coming again in the flesh, not clothed in the swaddling bands of humility, for but a few years; but in the radiant vesture of the Kingdom to reign forever.

For us Orthodox Christians, the Nativity of Christ is the Winter Pascha, and our celebration is rooted in the liturgical life of the Church; the world's "Xmas" hymns go on and on, oblivious, rather intentionally, to the point of the celebration. While we enjoy the worldly celebration, the family time, the gifts and giving, these are empty if we miss the central celebration itself: the services of the Nativity, culminating in receiving the Holy Mysteries. We can have Christmas without the Nativity, as does the world; but for Christians the Feast of the Nativity is Christmas!

We pray and fast to prepare ourselves for forty days before Christmas not only to be obedient to the Church, but to prepare ourselves to receive the Mystery of Communion. Will this Christmas be unto salvation, discerning and receiving His Body--that same Body born of Mary and laid in the Manger, the Son of God who has taken flesh and likened himself to us, so that He might liken us to Himself? Or do we judge ourselves, unaware or oblivious to the Mystery of Christ's assumption of our nature. We pray and fast to open our spiritual eyes, so that we can see Christ, discern Christ, know Christ--not just as a historical figure who taught nice things, but as God who has come and will come again.

The traditional Christmas carols talk about Baby Jesus lying in the manger. Let us contemplate this mystery during this season, a mystery that at that time only His Mother really understood: that this little infant, no different than any other, would become the Savior of the world, and redeem mankind, indeed all of creation, from death. What infinite potential, the potential of a man fulfilling the Divine Likeness, and manifesting God in His flesh, was invested in that little child. Who would have thought that a child born in the most destitute poverty and anonymity would become the criterion of judgment for the whole world?

We can also contemplate this same mystery in the life of every child. Who knows what the destiny of that child will be? Who can tell if he or she will become a point of hope for the whole world? That same infinite potential, the potential for deification, the potential for a life transfigured by God, the potential for a life that will bring joy and peace, or beget such a child?

The Feast of the Nativity is not only the contemplation of God taking human flesh. It is also the great celebration of humanity, that God so loved as to become one of us, that through that One, joy and peace and salvation may be given to the whole world. Let us treasure the life of every child, who is the image of Christ born of the Virgin, and remember the great calling which he or she, and each of us, has in God. Let us also remember that the ultimate fulfillment of that calling is found in the transformation of our very flesh, in which God became incarnate, that having become man for our sake, He enables us to partake of His Divinity on that glorious day of His coming again in the flesh.

With love in the Newborn Lord,

+JONAH

Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada

