



PARISH BULLETIN

HOLY ARCHANGHEL MICHAEL'S ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

No. 91/ 24 December 2017



Opening page of the Gospel of Matthew, Book of Kells 800 A.D. Scotland

Sunday before Nativity

Troparion (Resurrection), Tone 4

Having learned the joyful proclamation of the Resurrection from the Angel, and having cast off the ancestral condemnation, the women disciples of the Lord spake to the Apostles exultantly: Death is despoiled and Christ God is risen, granting great mercy to the world.

Seasonal Kontakion, Tone 3

*On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to * God the Word ineffably, * Who was before all the ages. * Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing * the gladsome tidings; * with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him * Who is willing to be gazed on * as a young Child Who * before the ages is God.*

Prokeimenon. Mode 4. Daniel 3.26,27

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers.

Verse: For you are just in all you have done.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40

BRETHREN, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon,

Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.



The Gospel According to Matthew 1 : 1-25

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and

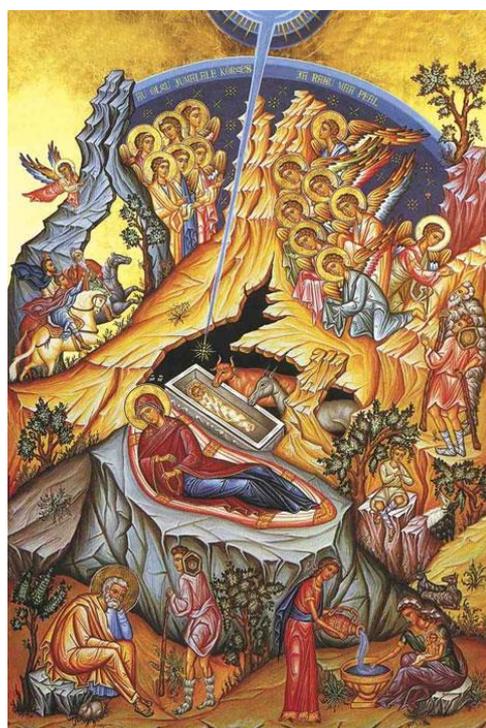
Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,

"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.



Pastoral Letter for The Feast Day of

The Lord's Nativity 2017

† NICOLAE

by the mercy of God

Archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox
Archdiocese of the United States of America
and
Metropolitan of the Romanian Orthodox
Metropolia of the Americas

*Beloved Clergy and Orthodox Christians,
peace and joy from Christ the Lord born in
Bethlehem's manger,
and from us Hierarchical Blessings.*

*"Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"
(Luke 2:14)*

**Very Reverend Fathers, Beloved
Faithful,**

Together with the angels we praise God again this year, because He has blessed us to celebrate together the Lord's Nativity, the feast of hope and joy, the feast for families and monastics, the feast of God's descent to the earth. And this descent is a source of unspeakable joy, for God is with us. This joy is proclaimed by angels not only to shepherds, but to all creation. In the kontakion of the Feast we say that to the unapproachable, the earth doth offer a small cave, and in other songs that He received the cave and the manger. The whole universe participates in the descent of God upon the earth and rejoices in the sending of the Savior. A song from the Vespers service says today heaven and earth have come together in the birth of Christ.

So God made man; in the image of God He made him; male and female

He made them, we read in the Book of Genesis 1:27. Created in the image of God, man shared love and communion with God; man was at peace with God and with all creation. Created from the dust of the earth and having received the breath of life from God (Genesis 2:7), man was at peace with himself, his soul and body being in complete harmony. St. Gregory Palamas says: "The eyes of the angels then saw the human soul, united with the senses and with the flesh, like another god, ... as a fully unified being" (On the Procession of the Holy Spirit).

By ceasing to fulfill the will of God, hiding from the face of God and refusing repentance (Genesis 3:10-12), man departs from God and loses His grace that held all things together; man loses peace with himself and harmony with the world. Man begins to consider matter, especially his own body, which is part of matter, as the closest and most accessible reality, forgetting to look towards God and desire His grace. The world is no longer seen as God's creation in which He reveals His reasons (logoi), but seen only through sense perception. St. Maximus the Confessor calls this attitude self-love, selfish, love that brings discord into human nature and is the spring of all passions. (Chapters on Love 3:8). But God did not leave man in discord, nor the world which

He created absent of harmony. In the fullness of time He sent His Son Himself to assume human nature divided in itself and to be received by the creation which was headed towards death. A song from the Matins service says: the Creator, seeing man whom He made with His hands dying, bowing down the heavens, He descended to him, incarnating Himself from the divine Virgin, He created him completely anew. And another song says: The Lord, by His coming, destroying the terrible enmity between the Creator and the created, completely defeated the losing enemy, and uniting the world with the higher powers, the Creator of man drew near. The Incarnation of the Son of God brought back peace between man and God, re-established all of creation in the primordial relationship of communion, of God sharing His grace with creation. Being born of the Virgin Mary, without the will of the flesh, but by the descent of the Holy Spirit, Christ fully assumed our nature, but without sin. He suffered hunger and thirst in the Quarantanian Desert, showed fear of death in the Garden of Gethsemane, as God overcoming them all and freeing man from their tyranny. Being God in human flesh, Christ brought back harmony within the human being itself: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and

has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" (Ephesians 2:14-16). Interpreting these verses, St. John Chrysostom speaks of the peace brought by Christ between the Jews and the Greeks, but also about the reconciliation of the human being (Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians). Man, re-created in Christ is at peace in his own being, is in peace with the world and with God. The gift of the Incarnation of the Son of God is evident in this peace that the Christian lives. If we understand these motives for the Savior's birth, it is fitting to take the next step and live now this opportunity everyone has. Christ is born, glorify Him, we all sing in the present tense. The Nativity of the Lord is a present and significant event, now, in our time and where we are. By receiving Christ into our souls, we make a dwelling place for Him as in the manger at Bethlehem. Each Christian can be a Christophoros, a Christ-bearer in the world. The Christ-bearing Christian is the one who has received His reconciliation, the one who finds

his being reconciled with himself and his neighbors, the one who offers this peace to the world. Is there a more beautiful gift than peace that we can offer during the days of Christmas? Our world continues to be disturbed by attacks and persecutions. Our world is increasingly opposed to the Creator's order. It proclaims man's autonomy and dismembers the family. Only the Christian that is pacified in his soul can oppose this distancing of man from God. Only the Christian who prays earnestly, who takes part in the mysteries of the Church, who is a full member of the Church community, can reach the state of reconciliation with himself and his fellow man, a state he should communicate to this troubled world. Prayer is the source of peace, of our personal and communal reconciliation, and the mysteries of the Church are the pathways for our sanctification. In a world of deceptive impressions and of violence, a Christian who is praying and participating in the mysteries of the Church can receive Christ in the Holy Eucharist and can truly and effectively offer Him to the world, overcoming the false lights and bearing in his image the light of the

Nativity of God as a man in Bethlehem. With these thoughts, I urge all our priests and faithful to rediscover the meaning of Christian living and to offer a living witness of the hope and joy of the Nativity of Christ. May we announce the joy of Christmas to loved ones and to those who are distant, to the lonely and sick, to those alienated from the Church and to those who seek a light in their lives. I pray that God may enlighten every priest and believer, and protect every parish and monastery of our Metropolia. May the New Year be blessed; may we increase our hope and grow in faith in God. I embrace you fraternally in Christ the Lord. May you spend the holy feast days of Christmas, New Year and Epiphany with health, peace and spiritual joy!

Many years!

Your brother in prayer to God
desiring all heavenly good,
† Metropolitan NICOLAE

Chicago, the Feast of the Nativity, 2017





Liturgical Schedule for this week

Sunday <i>December, 24</i>	4:00 pm	Christmas Eve - Vespers and Litia
Monday <i>December, 25</i>	8:30 am 9:30 am 6:00pm	Nativity of Our Lord - Matins Divine Liturgy Vespers and Litia
Tuesday <i>December, 26</i>	8:30 am 9:30 am 6:00 pm	Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God- Matins Divine Liturgy Vespers
Wednesday <i>December, 27</i>	9:00 am	Divine Liturgy – Archdeacon Stephen
Saturday <i>December, 30</i>	6:00 pm	Vespers
Sunday <i>December, 31</i>	9:00 am 10:00 am 10:30 pm 12:00 am	Matins Divine Liturgy New Year - Vespers and Litia Thanksgiving service for New Year
Monday <i>January, 1</i>	9:00 am 10:00 am	Matins Divine Liturgy – St. Basil

Announcements:

- **Christ is born! Merry Christmas!**
- **New Year dinner** - in the parish apartment starting with 8:00pm, followed by Vespers, Litia and Midnight services. Please let presbitera know if you would like to join us.
- On December 31, at **Midnight** after Vespers and Litia we will be giving a piece of Litia bread with Champagne to Celebrate the New Year together!! All are welcome to come and Celebrate Together!!! There will be Liturgy for St. Basil at 10:00 am.

- January 7th Icon from Nicula will be on pilgrimage to St. Michael's Church.



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