

Sts. Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church

First-enthroned of the apostles, teachers of the universe: Entreat the Master of all to grant peace to the world, and to our souls great mercy!

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December 26, 2021

27TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY
HOLY RIGHTEOUS ONES: JOSEPH THE BETROTHED, DAVID THE
KING, AND JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE LORD

Today 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Fri. 31 6:00pm Vespers Liturgy
*Feast of the Circumcision
of our Lord*
Sun. 02 10:00am Divine Liturgy

One must be baptized and chrismated an Orthodox Christian to receive Holy Communion. Guests are invited to receive a blessing at the chalice and partake of the post-Communion bread (Antidoron).

Fast Days: No fast this week!

Troparion – Tone 4 (Nativity of our Lord)

*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!*

Kontakion – Tone 3 (Righteous Ones)

*Today godly David is filled with
joy;
Joseph and James offer praise.
The glorious crown of their
kinship with Christ fills them
with great joy.
They sing praises to the One
ineffably born on earth,
and they cry out: “O
Compassionate One, save those
who honor Thee!”*

Prayers for those in our Sts. Peter and Paul community (parishioners, family, friends) can be listed for remembrance in our litanies during the Liturgy. Feel free to give names to Fr. Nicholas - please indicate how each person listed is connected to us (parishioner, family, friend, etc.), as well as why we are praying for them (health, memory, travel, etc.).

Confessions can be heard by appointment. If you need, I will come to you during the week. Please do not hesitate to call for a time to drop by the church or to have me visit you.

Remembrances for both the living and the dead during the prayers of preparation of the Eucharistic Lamb and during the Augmented Litany should be given the week before the desired remembrance so that the names can be put into the bulletin and given to the Deacons for the prayers. Any names of the living that are not marked as sick or traveling will be listed under general prayers.

SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK

Church Lectionary

Today

Galatians 1:11-19
Matthew 2:13-23

Monday

Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60
Matthew 21:33-42
2 Timothy 2:20-26
Mark 10:46-52

Tuesday

2 Timothy 3:16-4:4
Mark 11:11-23

Wednesday

2 Timothy 4:9-22
Mark 11:22-26

Thursday

Titus 1:5-2:1
Mark 11:27-33

Friday

1 Timothy 6:11-16
Matthew 12:15-21
Titus 1:15-2:10
Mark 12:1-12

Saturday

Colossians 2:8-12
Luke 2:20-21, 40-52
Hebrews 7:26-8:2
Luke 6:17-23
1 Timothy 3:14-4:5
Matthew 3:1-11

Reading the Bible in a Year

Dec 26: Revelation 4-6
Dec 27: Revelation 7-9
Dec 28: Revelation 10-12
Dec 29: Revelation 13-15
Dec 30: Revelation 16-18
Dec 31: Revelation 19-22
Jan 01: Genesis 1-4

DECEMBER EVENTS

December

26 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

31 – 7:00pm Vespers Liturgy *for the Circumcision of the Lord*

January

01 – NO VESPERS

02 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

05 – 7:00pm Vespers Liturgy & Blessing of the Waters
Feast of Theophany

07 – 6:00pm Fun Night

08 – 6:00pm Vespers

09 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

12 – 7:15pm Bible Study

15 – 6:00pm Vespers

Coffee Hour

This Week: Gregory Vrato Memorial

Next Week:

Flower Donation

This week's flowers were donated by:

The Royal Hours at Christmas

All Divine Liturgies in the Orthodox Church are preceded by the chanting of the Hours services, consisting of psalms, hymns and prayers. But in the great cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the Byzantine Emperor was present each year at the service beginning the celebration of the Nativity of Christ. Therefore, the Hours preceding the Vespers and Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great on Christmas Eve are given the name "Royal Hours."

The Emperor's attendance at the service was in part a demonstration of his humble acknowledgment that Jesus Christ reigns over all mortal beings. The third psalm is Psalm 45: "My heart overflows with good tidings as I sing my ode to the King; my tongue is like the pen of a skillful scribe. Thou art the fairest of the sons of men; grace is poured upon Thy lips; therefore God has blessed Thee forever. Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O mighty one, in Thy splendor and beauty. Draw Thy bow, ride forth in triumph and reign, for the sake of truth, and meekness, and righteousness." Such words could apply to only one Sovereign.

The verses of the Royal Hours make no attempt to conceal the human confusion and anguish of Joseph. He tells Mary, "I am troubled; what can I say to you? Doubt clouds my mind; depart from me! What has happened to you, O Mary? Instead of honor, you bring me shame. Instead of joy, you fill me with grief. Men who praised me will blame me."

The verses also chillingly describe the effect of one powerful man's jealousy and fear. Herod was willing to kill innocent children to keep his unique position as ruler: "Herod was filled with alarm when he saw the righteous wise men. Overcome by fury, he determined precisely when the child was born. Mothers were robbed of their infants: Their tender lives were reaped as a bitter harvest."

Mary could not stop the terror and sorrow created by Herod. But she could lovingly reassure Joseph. In the verses she says: "Why are you so troubled? Why are you in misery seeing me with child? Do you not understand at all? I bear a fearful mystery! Cast your fears away, and learn a strange wonder: God in His mercy descends from heaven to earth. Within my womb He has taken flesh! When He is pleased to be born, you will see Him. You will rejoice, and worship Him, your Creator."

The Royal Hours give us a whole atmosphere surrounding the birth of Our Lord: the venality of Herod who fears being supplanted; Joseph's fear of disgrace; Mary's faith, which leads her to inspire Joseph—and us—with words like "mystery" and "wonder" to describe the event she does not fully understand but has fully accepted.

Source: Orthodox Church in America



A Prayer for the Week

Today, the Virgin bears Him who is transcendent, and the earth presents the cave to Him who is beyond reach. Angels, along with shepherds glorify Him. The Magi make their way to Him by a star. For a new child has been born for us, the God before all ages. Amen

"God did not create us for wrath but for salvation (cf. I Thes. 5:9), so that we might enjoy His blessings; and we should therefore be thankful and grateful towards our Benefactor. But our failure to get to know His gifts has made us indolent, and indolence has made us forgetful, with the result that ignorance lords it over us."

-St. Peter of Damaskos



Galatians 1:11-19

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Matthew 2:13-23

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Children's Word

King of kings

Would you like to meet a king? Usually, a king is a king because his father is a king, and his father is too. Being a king goes on down the line.

We are getting closer and closer to Christmas, and we are almost ready to celebrate our Lord's birth! Today in the Gospel, we hear the history of Jesus's family. We hear many, many names, starting with Abraham and his son, and his son, and so on...all the way down to Joseph, Jesus's earthly father.

In this long list, we hear the names of lots of kings! We hear of David and Solomon. We hear about Manassah and Josiah and Asa. Jesus had lots of kings in his family history! In a way, Jesus had lots of royal connections.

We know though that these were all earthly kings, and Jesus was a different kind of king. We call Jesus the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," but we're not talking about the kind of king that David was or Josiah was. Jesus is more than that! Jesus was born to be our heavenly king, who reigns forever!

So, would you like to meet a king? Yes, you would, wouldn't you? Let's love our King with all our hearts so that we can meet Him each Sunday in Holy Communion. And that one day, we can meet Him in heaven forever!

SAINT ANASTASIA THE DELIVERER FROM POTIONS

Do you see the icon here? It's Saint Anastasia, the Great Martyr. Do you think she looks rich and famous, or do you think she looks kind of simple and plain?

Saint Anastasia grew up in a rich family, and her father (who wasn't a Christian) wanted her to marry a rich man (who wasn't a Christian), and she'd be set up for life! Young Anastasia did marry the man, but she had other plans for her life, too. She wanted to serve her Lord. She wanted to help other Christians serve the Lord too!

Saint Anastasia did just that. She gave up her rich and comfortable life in high Roman society. She learned more about Christ from a secret teacher, and she was baptized as a Christian. Anastasia visited other Christians (many who were secret Christians), and she acted kind of like a doctor to them. She visited Christians in many cities in her province, even going into the prisons to take care of them.

Saint Anastasia was a brave young woman. Later on, she suffered a lot as a Christian, and she was even killed because she wouldn't give up her faith. We call her a "great martyr" just like we do for other big saints like Saint Katherine and Saint George. That's because many people became Christian when they saw Anastasia's strong faith in the Lord!

We celebrate St. Anastasia on Wed., December 22nd.

Glorify Him!

December 25, 2021 · Fr. Barnabas Powell

Christ is Born!

“Where did she go?” As a father, that question sent chills up my spine! Our youngest had wandered off and I couldn’t see her. It was a crowded area and all my police training had me imagining the worst. Not knowing where she was was a terror I don’t think I had ever felt. And I have been shot at!

By God’s grace, she was found just moments later looking at some toy that had caught her eye in that very crowded store!

But what a powerful moment to get a glimpse of the pain of loss and confusion, facing the missing one you love. Looking for the object of your love is a natural place for us humans, and that makes sense. You see, our Creator looks for us as well.

Look at our lesson today in 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 Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; 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, till 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.

We know this story so well, but on this first day of Christmas, let’s revisit familiar words and see with new eyes the marvel of the Enfleshing of God for our sake!

We see the three Wise Men from the East, more than likely followers of the Zoroastrian religion in Persia, who had discerned from their watching the stars, that the Jewish King had been born. These Gentiles seemed to be more aware of the events in Bethlehem even more than the Jewish leaders who had been prepared for 6000 years to expect the Messiah’s coming. These Gentile pagans were looking for the King. So, naturally, they went to the king at the time, the Roman puppet king Herod, to ask about this momentous happening that they must have been convinced the whole city was focused on. But, alas, it was not so. The leaders in Jerusalem were still asleep to the coming of the Messiah. It took these pagan Gentiles to wake them up to the Event that would change the world.

Herod’s arrogance and fear were not enough to dissuade these seekers and they continued following the Star to the place where He was born!

Their seeking paid off. Now let’s switch to Another moment when Someone went looking for a missing child. Let’s go all the way back to the beginning when Adam and Eve were hiding from God in the Garden. The Voice echoes through the paradise “Adam, where are you?” God, the loving Father knew where His disobedient children were, but He needed them to realize that they were the ones lost. So God comes looking for His missing children!

Today, as the saying goes, wise men still seek Him. But, more importantly, He is still seeking you. He enfleshed Himself to come and find you. He lived, and lives, for you. Do you know that you are lost? Do you know you don’t have to be anymore? No, Christ is born and now you can be found by Being Orthodox on Purpose!

К Галатам 1:11-19

Возвещаю вам, братия, что Евангелие, которое я благовествовал, не есть человеческое, ибо и я принял его и научился не от человека, но через откровение Иисуса Христа. Вы слышали о моем прежнем образе жизни в Иудействе, что я жестоко гнал Церковь Божию, и опустошал ее, и преуспевал в Иудействе более многих сверстников в роде моем, будучи неумеренным ревнителем отеческих моих преданий. Когда же Бог, избравший меня от утробы матери моей и призвавший благодатью Своею, благоволил открыть во мне Сына Своего, чтобы я благовествовал Его язычникам, --я не стал тогда же советоваться с плотью и кровью, и не пошел в Иерусалим к предшествовавшим мне Апостолам, а пошел в Аравию, и опять возвратился в Дамаск. Потом, спустя три года, ходил я в Иерусалим видеться с Петром и пробыл у него дней пятнадцать. Другого же из Апостолов я не видел [никого], кроме Иакова, брата Господня.

От Матфея 2:13-23

Когда же они отошли, --се, Ангел Господень является во сне Иосифу и говорит: встань, возьми Младенца и Матерь Его и беги в Египет, и будь там, доколе не скажу тебе, ибо Ирод хочет искать Младенца, чтобы погубить Его. Он встал, взял Младенца и Матерь Его ночью и пошел в Египет, и там был до смерти Ирода, да сбудется реченное Господом через пророка, который говорит: из Египта воззвал Я Сына Моего. Тогда Ирод, увидев себя осмеянным волхвами, весьма разгневался, и послал избить всех младенцев в Вифлееме и во всех пределах его, от двух лет и ниже, по времени, которое выведал от волхвов. Тогда сбылось реченное через пророка Иеремию, который говорит: глас в Раме слышен, плач и рыдание и вопль великий; Рахиль плачет о детях своих и не хочет утешиться, ибо их нет. По смерти же Ирода, --се, Ангел Господень во сне является Иосифу в Египте и говорит: встань, возьми Младенца и Матерь Его и иди в землю Израилеву, ибо умерли искавшие души Младенца. Он встал, взял Младенца и Матерь Его и пришел в землю Израилеву. Услышав же, что Архелай царствует в Иудее вместо Ирода, отца своего, убоился туда идти; но, получив во сне откровение, пошел в пределы Галилейские и, придя, поселился в городе, называемом Назарет, да сбудется реченное через пророков, что Он Назореем наречется.

Galatianeve 1:11-19

Po ju bëj të ditur, vëllezër, se ungjilli që u predikua prej meje nuk është sipas njeriut; sepse as unë s'e mora prej njeriu, as nuk u mësova prej njeriu, po nëpërmjet zbulesës së Jisu Krishtit. Sepse keni dëgjuar për sjelljen time të mëparshme në Judaizëm, se fort tepër përndiqja kishën e Perëndisë për ta shkatërruar atë. Dhe përparoja në Judaizëm më tepër se shumë bashkëmoshatarë në kombin tim, sepse isha më tepër i zellshëm për traditat e etërve të mi. Po kur i pëlqeu Perëndisë, i cili më ndau që nga barku i nënës dhe më thirri me anë të hirit të tij, që të zbulojë Birin e tij tek unë, që ta ungjillëzoj atë ndër kombet, përnjëherë nuk u këshillova me mish e me gjak, as nuk u ngjita në Jerusalem tek ata që qenë apostuj para meje, por shkova në Arabi, dhe përsëri u ktheva në Damask. Pastaj, pas tre vjetësh u ngjita në Jerusalem, për të takuar Pjetrin; dhe qëndrova pranë tij pesëmbëdhjetë ditë. Edhe tjetër nga apostujt nuk pashë, veçse Jakovin, vëllain e Zotit.

Mattheut 2:11-19

Edhe pasi ikën ata, ja një engjëll i Zotit tek i duket në ëndërr Josifit, duke thënë: Ngrihu e merr me vete djalin dhe të ëmën e tij, edhe ik në Egjipt. Edhe rri atje deri kur të të them ty, sepse Herodi do të kërkojë djalin që ta vrasë. Edhe ai u ngrit, e mori me vete djalin edhe të ëmën e tij natën, edhe iku në Egjipt. Edhe ndenji atje deri në vdekjen e Herodit, që të përmbushet e thëna prej Zotit me anë të profetit, që thotë: “Nga Egjipti thirra tim bir”. Atëherë Herodi, kur pa se u gënjye nga magët, u zemërua fort, edhe dërgoi e vrau gjithë djemtë që ishin në Betlehem e nëpër gjithë rrethinat e tij, që nga dy vjeç e poshtë, sipas kohës që kishte marrë vesh saktësisht nga magët. Atëherë u përmbush ç'është thënë nga profeti Jeremia, që thotë: “Zë u dëgjua në Rama, vaj e të qarë e gjëmë shumë. Rakela qante djemtë e saj, edhe nuk donte të ngushëllohej, sepse nuk janë”. Edhe si vdiq Herodi, ja një engjëll i Zotit tek i duket në ëndërr Josifit në Egjipt e i thotë: Ngrihu e merr me vete djalin dhe të ëmën e tij, edhe shko në dhe të Izraelit; sepse vdiqën ata që kërkonin jetën e djalit. Edhe ai u ngrit e mori me vete djalin dhe të ëmën e tij, edhe erdhi në dhe të Izraelit. Po kur dëgjoi se Arkelau mbretëron në Jude në vend të Herodit, të atit të tij, pati frikë të shkojë atje; edhe siç iu tregua atij nga Perëndia në ëndërr, iku në anët e Galilesë, edhe erdhi e ndenji në një qytet që quhet Nazaret; që të përmbushet ç'është thënë nga profetët, se nazaretas do të quhet.