

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Sunday before the Nativity
The Sunday of the Holy God-bearing Fathers

Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. **(KJV)**

The present Gospel is proclaimed in God's Holy Church every year on the Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity. Jesus Christ's birth as God taking on human flesh in simple surroundings to a young virgin woman captivates the human mind.

The Gospel speaks plainly about the action of the Holy Spirit in Christ's birth. Jesus' birth being identified with "God with us" challenges the human mind to think extensively of this singular extraordinary birth.

The believer must turn to the Lord for guidance and understanding of Christ's birth and meaning. The present Gospel mentions known figures through the centuries recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

The prophecy of Christ's virgin birth is an integral part of the present Gospel. The message to the world today is deeply rooted in preceding centuries. The Church celebrates Christ's birth in the present while clearly knowing the path to the present.

The Gospel states Jesus will save His people from their sins. This message of hope for every generation of sinners opens the roadway to a life of joy. Sin need not weigh down the believer. Sin need not paralyze the believer.

Life needs not be overcome with darkness, gloom and despair. Every person thinks, says or does something contrary to God's teachings. The Lord Jesus Christ, born of a virgin as proclaimed by the Prophet offers Light to overcome darkness.

Every generation, every year, believers need to experience the joy of Jesus Christ's birth. The message of the forgiveness of sins never gets old. The message of the forgiveness of sins never decreases in value.

Jesus' forgiveness of sins is clearly associated with believers' forgiveness of others. Forgiveness heals the heart, mind and soul of the forgiven. When believers forgive others, the believer acts as a healer just as Jesus Christ is the Healer.

The world benefits when healing abounds. The world is better when Jesus forgives sinners. The world is better when sinners repent and forgive each other. Households are strengthened when forgiveness is frequent in the family.

Parishes are stronger when parishioners forgive each other readily. Communities improve when forgiveness abounds among the residents. Nations get along better when leaders do not hold grudges against other world leaders.

Peace is associated with Jesus Christ's birth. As the celebration of Jesus' birth approaches, each heart, mind and soul does well to think carefully about practicing forgiveness with others. Each believer does well to try to be at peace with others.

Proverbs 16:7 states "When a man's **ways please the LORD**, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." (KJV) Every home, community and nation benefits when peace prevails. May Jesus Christ's birth result in greater peace among us.

The Sunday before the Nativity. The Sunday of the Holy God-bearing Fathers. Holy Martyr Sebastian. St. Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem and Others with him. December 18/31, 2023, Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic



IRINEJ

BY THE GRACE OF GOD
BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA

Most beloved clergy and monastics, sons and daughters, faithful children
of the Eastern American Diocese of our Most Holy Serbian Orthodox Church:

GOD'S PEACE — CHRIST IS BORN!

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!
Today Bethlehem receives Him who reigns forever with the Father.
Today angels glorify the Newborn Babe in hymns worthy of God:
Glory to God in the highest!
And on earth, peace, good will to men!"
(Matinal Verse of Christmas)*

The Nativity of Christ in the flesh is, indeed, my beloved, a holiday of great joy. For every Christmas, as *"Bethlehem receives Him who reigns forever with the Father"*, we also discover anew Love Incarnate, as we receive Christ in our hearts. Through the integrity and unity of everyone and everything in Him, the true man within is revealed in each of us. This, therefore, is the very source of our boundless joy and festal celebration. We join the angels in hymns of praise, exclaiming from all our heart: *"Glory to God in the highest"*, as we earnestly pray for peace on earth, and good will to humankind.

Now we behold a Divine Child, who did not come as an intruder in our lives; rather as a loving God, who neither came to reign over us, nor to lord over us, rather to be one with us as a brother, as a friend, and as a constant companion to all of us – one who will lay down His life for us. As such, He came into this world, which He created, as the Prince of Peace, to identify with us and usher in a Reign of Peace. This Kingdom shall reign over all, allowing us, here and now, to be the extension of His love, as stewards of peace in this world, sealed with His declaratory beauty! Truly, *"blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance"* (Ps. 33:12).

The cold and darkness of winter, which can dominate our lives and our society, now radiate beneath the brilliant and warm glow of the illumining Star of Bethlehem. The chill and nightfall of winter dissipate before this heavenly hearth making a new home for Him, who tonight was *"made flesh by the Holy Spirit and made man of the ever-virgin Mary"*! That is why the Christmas Star is always a sign and symbol that guides us through so many obstacles and adversities, so that we can find, yet again, the right path. In so doing, we establish a system of values, are regenerated, and demystify all existing half-truths and untruths. In so doing, we discover those divine and eternal aspirations and dimensions within us and perceive the true meaning of our human existence.

Toward the close of the old year, and the beginning of the new year, Christmas affords us a renewed opportunity to hear Christ, saying: “Behold, I make all things new!” (Rev. 21:5). And, precisely in that newness, to turn over a new leaf in our lives and to begin looking at ourselves and others from a new perspective, devoid of bitterness and anger. The only way to change the world around us is to perceive the divine dimensions and aspirations within ourselves and others. Only then will we be able to comprehend the true joy and fullness of life. For Christ is born and hope has arrived – exceeding all our expectations, bringing restoration to families and communities! Only His hope can raise those stumbling and place us, once again, on the narrow path to salvation.

In the words of the ever-memorable Protospesbyter Alexander Schmemmann: “The Church, if it is to be the Church, must be the revelation of that divine love which God *poured out into our hearts*. Without this love nothing is *valid* in the Church because nothing is possible. The content of Christ’s Eucharist is love, and only through love can we enter into it and be made its partakers” (For the Life of the World). As such, we must allow Christ Emmanuel to conquer our own hearts to offer clarity on the most elusive of human emotions – peace, forgiveness and humility, the very attributes of Incarnate Love.

Greeting you in the joy in which heaven and earth glow this Holy Night, in celebration of this divine intervention in history, praying that the true light of knowledge will truly shine among us, renewing in us the wholeness and unity of everyone and everything in praising the Newborn Babe, joyfully, from all our heart, exclaiming:

**GOD’S PEACE – CHRIST IS BORN!
INDEED, HE IS BORN!**

Given in New York at Christmas in the Year 2023.

Your prayerful intercessor before the crib of the Divine Infant,

+Irinej

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Donations December 24, 2023

Offering - \$ 3,890.00 Candles - \$40.00
Dues - \$50.00

Donations

In Memory of Milos & Milka Tumbas from
Dianna Dunnington - \$100
From William & Melanie Schall - \$1,000

Large Candles

IMO Mary Ellen Locher-Byrd from Helene Gleason
IMO Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp
IMO Grandparents Amelia & Pete Mastovich from Rick Kondas
IMO brother Joseph Kondas from Rick Kondas

**Donations are now being taken for the Gold coin for our
Christmas Cesnica. Please see Richard Gardenhour.**

DONATION ENVELOPES

**Please be aware that there is a mistake for the Palm Sunday
Envelope - It is marked as March 31st. Our Palm Sunday is
Sunday, April 28th.
Sorry for any inconvenience.**

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

SATURDAY (January 6th) - Christmas Eve

9:30 AM – Vespers and Divine Liturgy (of St. Basil the Great)

7:00 PM - Vigil and Blessing of the Yule Log (Badnjak) followed by blessing of
Cesnica with Golden Coin and Holy Fathers' message for everyone

SUNDAY (January 7th) – The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ -
BOŽIĆ - 10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

MONDAY (January 8th) – Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos - 9:30 AM – Divine
Liturgy

TUESDAY (January 9th) - Holy Apostle, Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY (January 10th) – The Holy God-bearing Fathers
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY (January 14th) - Circumcision of Our Lord (St. Basil)
10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

UPCOMING EVENTS

Serbian Father's Day – Sunday
December 31, 2023

St. Sava Celebration

Sunday, January 28, 2023

Men's Club Pork Chop Dinner

Sunday, February 4, 2024