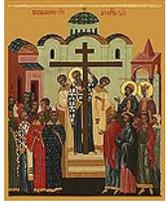


✠Bulletin✠

December 25th



Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

**The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ
The Adoration of the Magi: Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar
Commemoration of the Shepherds in Bethlehem who were watching their
flocks and went to see the Lord.**

Priestmonk Jonah the Martyr of Pechenga (1590)

Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

Thursday – December 25th

8:45 am - Hours

9:00 am - Divine Liturgy - **Feast of the Nativity of Christ**

Sunday December 28th

9:15 am - Hours

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

Cultivate the Spiritual Discipline of Gratitude

The Blessed Exchange

by Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Orthodox Christian Scriptures proclaim—and the Liturgy celebrates, the Sacraments realize, the Icons depict, the Canons protect, the Martyrs witness, the Fathers explain, and the Saints live—the Blessed Exchange that God accomplished in the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and glorification of His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit's power, for the salvation of humanity and the whole of creation:

God became human to make humans divine.

God became visible to allow humans to see Him.

God became touchable to allow humans to touch Him.

God spoke in human words to allow humans to hear Him.

God entered earthly time to make humans eternal.

God took flesh to make human bodies His dwelling.

God lived as a creature on earth to recreate the whole of creation.

He was a human being so that by His humanity we could become gods by grace.

He was small so that by His smallness we could become divinely great.

He was poor that so by His poverty we could become divinely rich.

He was weak so that by His weakness we could attain God's power.

He was a fool in this world so that we could attain God's wisdom.

He emptied Himself so that by His emptiness we could be filled with all the fullness of God.

He became the servant of all so that by his servitude we could all reign with Him.

He became nothing so that through His nothingness we could become everything.

He was homeless that by being a stranger He could take us home with Himself to God.

He was naked that by His nakedness He could clothe us with Himself.

He was wounded that by His wounds we could be healed.

He was without comeliness or form that we could be splendidly beautiful.

He was arrested that by being imprisoned we could be liberated.

He hungered that by His hunger He could be the Bread of Life for all who eat Him.

He thirsted that He could give us the Living Water that we would never thirst again.

His Body was broken that we who eat Him could be made whole.
His Blood was shed that we who drink Him could never die.
He became Sin that in Him we might become the Righteousness of God.
He became a Curse that in Him we might become the Blessedness of God .
He became a Corpse that in Him we might be forever Alive.
He suffered to free us from our sufferings.
He endured the Passion to free us from our passions.
He was tempted, tested and tried, just as we are, so that we could be victorious in Him.
He died the most vile death that a man, especially a Jew, could possibly die that we could live as God intended us to live, both now in this world and in the age to come.

To Him be glory, honor, worship, dominion, praise and thanksgiving, with God His Father and His all holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Requests

James Clark – Parishioner of St. Herman’s
Nicholas Kowalski
Carolyn – Robert & Debra’s Forster’s daughter
Anne and Scott Peatross
Robert (John) Forster
Robert Kozera
Megan – David & Phyllis Bartos’ daughter
Rosemary – Friend of David & Phyllis Bartos

Please pray for our families in Ukraine

Leonid, Nadiia, Andrii, Halyna,
Volodymyr, Maryna, Dmytro, Bohdan,
Nadiia, Oleksandr, Tetiana,
Roman, Mykola
Anatoly, Olga, Maria, Andrei

Please let us know of anyone you would like to add to the Prayer Lists.

Inquirers & Catechism Class

Classes will be on Sundays following Divine Liturgy. For those new to understanding Orthodoxy or for those who want to expand your foundation, please join us for our classes. Please check the schedule for changes.

tithe.ly.com

Another way to “donate”. This app can be downloaded to your phone and Holy Cross can be accessed via this app. Also, tithe.ly can be accessed through the church website www.HolyCrossFtMyers.org

Schedule of Weekly Services

Thursday January 1, 2026

8:45 am – Hours

9:00 am – Divine Liturgy

Circumcision of Christ & St. Basil the Great

Monday January 5th

5:30 pm – Great Compline with the Great Blessing of Water

Feast of Theophany (Strict Fast)

Tuesday January 6th

8:45 am – Hours

9:00 am - Divine Liturgy

Feast of Theophany

Saturday January 17th

4:30 pm - Great Vespers

Saturday January 24th

4:30 pm - Great Vespers

Friday January 30th

8:45 am – Hours

9:00 am – Divine Liturgy

Synaxis of the Ecumenical Teachers and Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom.

The Divine Liturgy

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Variable Hymns and Readings

The First Antiphon

I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will make all Thy wonders known. *(Ps. 110:1a)*

Refrain: 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. *(Ps. 110:1b-2a) (Refrain)*

They are sought out according to His will. *(Ps. 110:2b) (Refrain)*

Full of honor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever. *(Ps. 110:3) (Refrain)*

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

The Second Antiphon

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments. *(Ps. 111:1)*

Refrain: 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. *(Ps. 111:2) (Refrain)*

Glory and wealth are in His house and His righteousness endures forever. *(Ps. 111:3) (Refrain)*

Light rises in the darkness for the upright; the Lord is merciful, compassionate, and righteous. *(Ps. 111:4) (Refrain)*

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

("Only-begotten Son and immortal Word of God...")

The Third Antiphon

The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand." *(Ps. 109:1a)*

Refrain: Tone 4 *Troparion of the Feast of the Nativity*

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!

"Until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool!" *(Ps. 109:1b)*

Troparion of the Feast of the Nativity

The Lord will send Thee the scepter of power from Zion: "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies!" *(Ps. 109:2)*

Troparion of the Feast of the Nativity

With Thee is dominion on the day of Thy power, in the radiance of holiness. *(Ps. 109:3a) Troparion of the Feast of the Nativity*

PRIEST: Entrance Verse

Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord has sworn, and will not change His mind: "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." *(Ps. 109:3b-4)*

Troparion of the Feast of the Nativity

Tone 4 Troparion

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

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.

(Instead of the Trisagion: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Imortal.....)

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

Tone 8 Prokeimenon

Let all the earth worship Thee and praise Thee; / let it praise Thy Name, O Most High! *(Ps. 65:4)*

V. Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth! Sing of His Name, give glory to His praise! (Ps. 65:1b-2)

Galatians 4:4-7 (Epistle, Feast of the Nativity)

Brethren: 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.

Tone 1

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. (Ps. 18:1)

V. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. (Ps. 18:2)

Matthew 2:1-12 (Gospel, Feast of the Nativity)

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.

Explanation of Today's Gospel Reading Matthew 2:1-12

By Blessed Theophylact

Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. Being interpreted, "Bethlehem" means "house of bread" and "Judea" means "confession". May we also now become a house of the spiritual bread by means of our confession. **In the days of Herod.** He mentions Herod so that you, O reader, might learn that the line of rulers and kings of the tribe of Judah had failed, and so by necessity Christ came. For Herod was not a Judean, but an Idumean, the son of Antipater by an Arab woman. So, when the line of the rulers had failed, then came the Expectation of the Gentiles, as Jacob had prophesied. **The king.** There was another Herod, the Tetrarch, and so the evangelist adds the title "king".² **Behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem.** Why did the Magi come? For the condemnation of the Jews. For if the idolatrous Magi believed, what defense could the Jews give? The Magi also came so that the glory of Christ might shine forth all the more through the witness of the Magi who before had been subject to the demons and were enemies of God. "From the East." This, too, is for the condemnation of the Jews; for the Magi came from such a great distance to worship Him, while the Jews, who had Christ there in their midst, persecuted Him.

1. King Herod the Great was the son of Antipater who founded the Idumean dynasty. King Herod ruled over Galilee and Judea from 40 B.C. until the birth of Christ. He divided his kingdom among his sons Archelaus, (Mt. 2:22), Herod Antipas, and Philip. Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea and is the Herod who slew John the Baptist (Mt. 14:1-12). In the Acts of the Apostles there is mention of later members of this Idumean dynasty: Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12) and Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25 and 26).

2. 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.” It is said that these Magi were descendants of Balaam the soothsayer; and that when they discovered Balaam's oracle, “A star shall arise out of Jacob,” (Num 24:17) they understood the mystery concerning Christ, and so they came desiring to see Him that had been born. “For we have seen His star in the East.” When you hear “star”, do not think that it was a star such as we see, but a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star. The Magi were astrologers, and so the Lord used what was familiar to them to draw them to Himself. In the same manner, the Lord astonished Peter the fisherman by the multitude of fish which he caught by the name of Christ. That the star was an angelic power is apparent from the fact that it shone even by day, and that it moved as they moved, and stood still as they rested; also, that it moved from Persia in the north to Jerusalem in the south. For a star never moves from north to south. “And are come to worship Him.” These Magi are seen to possess great virtue. For if they came to worship Christ in a strange land, how much more would they preach Him with great boldness in Persia?

3. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Herod was troubled because he was a foreigner and feared for his kingdom; for he knew that he was unworthy of it. But why were the Jews troubled? They ought instead to have rejoiced that they would have a king to whom the kings of Persia paid homage. **But evil is indeed a senseless thing.**

4. 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. The scribes were the teachers of the people, like those whom we call “scholars”. God ordained in His providence that these men be asked, so that they would confess the truth, and by this confession be condemned. For those who crucified Him had first confessed Him.

5. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: By which prophet? By Micah, (Micah 5:1) who said:

6. ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah. Since Bethlehem was small, it was despised, but now it is greatly renowned for Christ Who came forth from it. For all people from the ends of the earth come to venerate this holy Bethlehem. **For out of you shall come a Ruler.** Rightly did he say, “out of you shall come” and not “in you shall remain.” For Christ did not remain in Bethlehem, but came out from, that is, left it after His birth, and spent most of His years in Nazareth. The Jews say

that this prophecy concerns Zerubbabel, but they plainly are lying; for Zerubbabel was not born in Bethlehem, but in Babylon. Consider his name: “Zeru” means “seed” or “birth”, and “babel” means “Babylon”, therefore, “he that was born in Babylon.” But even the prophecy refutes them where it says, “His goings forth are from the beginning, and in the days of the age.” (Micah 5:1) Of whom else are the goings forth both from the beginning and in the days of this age if not of Christ, Who had two goings forth, that is, a double genesis? The first, His begetting, was from the beginning from the Father, and the second, His Nativity according to the flesh, was in the days of this age, and took its beginning from the Theotokos and occurred in time. Let the Jews say, therefore, that Zerubbabel was from the beginning; but they have no grounds on which to make this claim. **Who will shepherd My people Israel.** The prophecy said, “will shepherd”, not “tyrannize” or “devour” them. For the other kings were not shepherds but wolves. But Christ is a shepherd, as He Himself says, “I am the good shepherd.” (John 10:11) “My people Israel” means those who believed, whether Jew or Gentile. “Israel” means “seeing God”, so all those who see God are Israelites, even those who are Gentiles.

7. Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men. He summoned them secretly on account of the Jews, for he suspected that perhaps the Jews would highly esteem the Child and devise means to save Him as their future liberator. Therefore, Herod meets with the Magi secretly. **And determined from them what time the star appeared.** That is, he learned the exact time. The star had appeared to the Magi before the Lord was born. Since their journey would take a long time, the star appeared well before His birth so that they could worship Him while He was still in swaddling clothes. Some say that the star appeared simultaneously with Christ’s birth, and that the Magi came two years later and found the Lord neither in swaddling clothes nor in the manger, but in the house with His mother when He was two years old. But you, O reader, consider the former interpretation to be better.²

2. In supporting the former view Bl. Theophylact follows St. John Chrysostom. Saints Epiphanius and Jerome, among others, suggest the latter.

8. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child. He did not say, “search for the king” but “search for the Child”, for he could not endure even to utter Christ’s name. From this it is clear that he was in a rage against Christ.

8-9. 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. The Magi were guileless and thought that Herod, too, spoke without guile. **And behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them.** The star was hidden for a time by God’s providence so that they would inquire of the Jews, and Herod would be troubled, and thus the truth would be made all the more apparent. But when they had departed from Jerusalem, it again appeared and guided them; from which it is clear that the star was a divine power. **Untill it came and stood over where the young Child was.** This, too, was extraordinary. For the star descended from the heights and came closer to the earth to show them the place. For if it had appeared to them from the heights, how would they have been able to know the particular spot where Christ was? For the stars are visible over a great area. So it is that you may see the moon over your house, while it appears to me that it is over my house alone; and, in short, to each one the moon, or a star, appears to stand over them alone. Neither could this star have pointed out where Christ was if it had not descended and all but stood over the head of the Child.

10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. They rejoiced that they had not been led astray but had found what they were seeking.

11. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother. At the time of His birth, the Virgin laid the Child in the manger as they could not find a house then. But later it is most likely that they found a house, and it is there that the Magi found them. Joseph and Mary had gone up to Bethlehem to be enrolled there, as Luke says, and as there was a great number of people assembled there for the census, they did not have a house for a time, and so He was born in the cave. Later a house was found and there the Magi saw the Lord. **And fell down and worshiped Him.** Behold, what enlightened souls! They saw a pauper and worshipped. For they had been informed that He was God, and therefore they also offered Him gifts, as to God and man. Listen, then: **And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.** Gold they offered to Him as to a king, for we pay tribute of gold to the king to whom we are subject. They offered frankincense as to God, for we burn incense to God. They offered myrrh since He would taste of death. For the Jews would prepare the dead for burial with myrrh to preserve the body from corruption. Myrrh, which is dry, desiccates the body and prevents worms

from breeding. Do you see the faith of the Magi? They had been taught by the prophecy of Balaam alone that the Lord was both God and King and would be born for our sake. Listen to the prophecy: “He reclined and rested as a lion, and as a young lion; may they be blessed that call Thee blessed.” (Num 24:9) Behold the kingship in the lion, and death in the reclining. Behold the divinity; for only the divine nature has the power to bless.

12. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Consider the sequence of events. First God guided them to faith by means of the star. Then they came to Jerusalem and He taught them through the prophet Micah that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. And finally, they were warned by means of the angel. They obeyed the warning, that is, the divine speech. Therefore, having received the warning, that is, having accepted the revelation from God, they deceived Herod. They were not afraid of pursuit, but were bold in the power of Him that had been born. Thus they were true witnesses and confessors.

Instead of “It is truly meet...,” we sing:

(Feast of the Nativity of Christ)

Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious 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

The Lord has sent redemption to His people. *(Ps. 110:9)*
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!