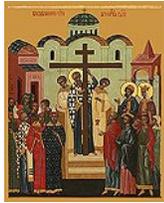


## ✠Bulletin✠

Week of December 21st to December 27th



## Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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**28th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 3**  
**Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom**

### Sunday of the Forefathers

#### Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ. Sunday before the Nativity

Virgin Martyr Juliana of Nicomedia, and with her 500 men and 130 women (304). Repose of St. Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow, Wonderworker of All Russia (1326). Right-believing Princess Juliana of Vyazma (1406). Repose of Bl. Procopii (Procopius) of Vyatka, Fool-for-Christ (1628). Martyr Themístocles of Myra in Lycia (251).

### Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

#### Sunday December 21st

9:15 am - Hours

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

#### Wednesday December 24<sup>th</sup>

3:00 pm – Great Compline with Litya

Feast of the Nativity of Christ (Strict Fast)

#### Thursday December 25<sup>th</sup>

8:50 am- Hours

9:00 am – Divine Liturgy

Feast of the Nativity of Christ

### Weekly Schedule

#### Sunday December 21st

- Choir Practice

## GOD IS WITH US

By Fr. George Timko

*"God is with us! Understand all ye nations,  
and submit yourselves. For God is with us!"*

This Christmas Eve declaration, proclaimed at the Great Compline, contains the sum and substance of our Christmas Festival. It affirms that God is not a remote Reality but a Divine Presence immanent in human existence. It is the promise of God revealed in the Book of Isaiah and confirmed by Christ's Incarnate Nativity and Existence. The joyful Message of our Christmas Celebration reiterates this divine assurance that *"God is with us!"*; that the Divine and Human are contiguous or adjoining.

What all this means has important ramifications in human existence. So, we need to seriously consider its implications for our life. We are told that God's Being is intimately bound up with created being; that the Creator and the creature are in proximity, in a close relationship and association. God accompanies us as a presence and participant in our life. God is always near us, both at the side of and within our life.

We are then called to *understand* this ultimate truth and the resulting consequences. To understand means to perceive the essential reality of something, to grasp its nature and to assimilate its actual content. Only when I apprehend the full meaning of something am I enabled to share its substance and benefit from its results. Only by *standing under* something can I be personally impacted by it and influenced by its effects.

Once we understand the meaning of the Divine being with us, we are summoned to *submit* ourselves to that Reality. This means that we must surrender, yield and give ourselves to being with the Divine Presence. Our life must be subjected to God's rule and dominance, to His control and influence. Total submission is the only appropriate response when we awaken to the realization of God being so close to us.

Most of us have extreme difficulty with this notion. We tend to objectify God as existing in some far-off place completely separated from us in time and space. As a result, we are always looking up to the sky, reaching out with outstretched arms or going off to some far away holy place on a pilgrimage. We are seeking, looking and searching for God where He doesn't exist. We are trying to find Him where He isn't. It's a little bit like trying to find your heart outside yourself.

One of the great spiritual masters, Augustine, had to overcome this delusion. In his *Soliloquies*, he acknowledges the futility of seeking God outside oneself:

*"I did not find Thee, O Lord, anywhere outside. I made the mistake of looking for Thee everywhere outside, while all the while You were inside, dwelling within me, hidden in the depths of my soul."* He then goes on to affirm that *"He desires to know God and the soul. Nothing else! Nothing more at all! For the soul is the place where God appears to us. God is seen in the soul; only there can we know God and in no other place."*

Another spiritual master, John of the Cross, gives similar evidence: *"God is hidden within your soul and there alone must you seek Him; for there alone will you find Him."* And yet another spiritual giant, Maximos the Confessor, gives us the same direction: *"Those who seek God should never look for Him outside themselves. On the contrary they must seek Him within themselves."* And such is the testimony of all our spiritual fathers.

Christ's fundamental teaching affirms this inward intimate involvement of God in the human dimension. He begins His ministry with this Good Message: *God is near us, and we need only entrust ourselves to that reality and transform our consciousness to have personal spiritual knowledge of His Presence.* But Christ goes beyond the idea of God's nearness to us, the notion of His being beside us in space and time. He goes deeper into the heart, into the inward being of the soul. He tells us that God exists within us, and that He cannot be experienced in any outward location or known by any external circumstances.

For our spiritual fathers, this teaching became the basic foundation and direction of our spiritual journey toward union with God. Philotheos of Sinai summed up this idea most concisely:

*"When our Lord Jesus Christ said the Kingdom of God is within us, He thereby indicated that God dwells within our hearts. Therefore, we must always strive to enter the Realm of Heaven inside our hearts. For the Presence of God is found there in the heaven of the heart and there is the dwelling place of God."*

If God dwells with us and within us, why then do we not experience this Divine Presence? Is it because we are consciously somewhere else? God is with us but where are we? Could it be we are estranged because our minds have become dispersed and occupied with other things? It is in this light that Gregory of Nyssa sees our dilemma and its remedy:

*"Christ teaches us: 'The Kingdom of God is within you'. This text, I think, points out that the Reality of God is not something separate from our nature; nor is it far from those who choose to look for it. This Reality dwells within every one of us, ignored and forgotten, choked with the cares and pleasures of this life. Yet it is readily discovered again when we turn our minds towards it. The mind must be recollected within and our attention directed inwardly."*

Getting in touch with God in the inward being involves a movement of consciousness. The practice of inward meditation, the mind-heart prayer and the mindfulness of God is the way one transforms his consciousness and awakens to the realization of God in the inner depths of his soul. St. Basil the Great sums up the essence of this interior spiritual process:

*"A mind not dispersed among external objects and not carried about through the world by the senses, recollects itself and awakens to God within. Such activity is true prayer. For such prayer implants the mindfulness of God in the soul. We awaken to God's indwelling Presence within our inner being by being mindful of Him and thus have Him living in us."*

The joy of Christmas is found in the fact that we are never outside the Realm of God. And the energy of our celebration should be focused not on entertaining ourselves with various forms of pageantry but on incarnating God within ourselves. St. Gregory of Nyssa sees the fulfillment of our spiritual potential in this inner activity of embodying the Divine:

*"You should realize how much your Creator has honored you. You alone are made in His image, in the likeness of that nature which surpasses all understanding; you alone are a similitude of eternal beauty, an image of true Light. And if you turn to Him, you will become what He is. Nothing in all creation can equal your splendor. You can wholly embrace God. He dwells within you; He pervades your entire being with His entire being, saying: 'I will dwell in them, and I will walk with them'."*

## What is Compline?

Compline (which means “completion”) is the last liturgical service of the day and consists of various psalms, hymns, and prayers. It is part of the “Daily Cycle” (order) of liturgical services performed each day in the Orthodox Church — a tradition carried over from Biblical Judaism into Christianity of praying seven times a day.

In Greek, Compline is called Απόδειπνο (“Apodeipnon”) — which means “after supper” — because the service is celebrated after the dinner meal before going to bed.

There are two types of Compline services — “Small” and “Great.” Small Compline is a shorter (“small”) version of Great Compline. Small Compline can be said privately at home or publicly in church and is offered each night except when Great Compline is celebrated.

Great Compline is prayed at church during certain times of the liturgical year: Tuesday and Thursday of Cheesefare Week, Monday through Thursday during Great Lent, and Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week. It is also celebrated Monday through Friday during the Nativity, Apostles’, and Dormition fasts, and eves of Nativity, Theophany, and Annunciation.

Great Compline is composed of three sections, each beginning with the call to prayer, “Come, let us worship...” Section One includes the Creed and the Prayer of Saint Basil the Great. Section Two includes the Prayer of Manasseh, Troparia of Repentance, and the Prayer of Saint Mardarius. Section Three includes the Prayer of Saint Ephraim with prostrations, Supplicatory Prayers to the Theotokos and Jesus Christ. In some places (like monasteries), the service ends with prayers of mutual forgiveness, a litany, and the veneration of icons and relics.

### [tithe.ly.com](http://tithe.ly.com)

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## Schedule of Weekly Services

### **Thursday January 1, 2026**

9:00 am – Divine Liturgy

**Circumcision of Christ & St. Basil the Great**

### **Monday January 5<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Feast of Theophany (Strict Fast)**

### **Tuesday January 6<sup>th</sup>**

8:50 am – Hours

9:00 am - Divine Liturgy

**Feast of Theophany**

### **Saturday January 17<sup>th</sup>**

4:30 pm - Great Vespers

### **Saturday January 24<sup>th</sup>**

4:30 pm - Great Vespers

### **Friday January 30<sup>th</sup>**

8:50 am – Hours

9:00 am – Divine Liturgy

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

## **Annual Parish Meeting – January 18, 2026**

Holy Cross annual parish meeting is scheduled for Sunday January 18, 2026 following Divine Liturgy.

Per the Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America, Uniform Parish By-laws, Article IV, Section 1:

*The Parish Meeting is the highest authority of the Parish as a civil corporation. All members of the Parish as defined in Article III, Section 1 which are those persons who have been baptized and chrismated, or otherwise canonically received, into the Church and who consciously uphold and profess the Orthodox Faith, who have been members for a period of six months and are at least eighteen years old may attend and vote at the Parish Meeting.*

## **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.

### **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.**

## **The Divine Liturgy**

**Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom**  
Variable Hymns and Readings

### **Tone 3 Troparion** *(Resurrection)*

Let the heavens rejoice!  
Let the earth be glad!  
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.  
He has trampled down death by death.  
He has become the first born of the dead.  
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,  
and has granted to the world//  
great mercy.

### **Tone 2 Troparion** *(Holy Fathers)*

Great are the accomplishments of faith,  
for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though in the  
waters of rest;  
and the Prophet Daniel appeared  
a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.//  
So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

### **Tone 4 Troparion** *(Forefeast)*

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all!  
Adorn thyself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the  
Virgin in the cave!  
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit;  
if we eat of It, we shall live forever and not die like Adam.//  
Christ is born to raise up again what fell in former times, His image.

### **Tone 4 Troparion** *(St. Juliana)*

All-blameless bride and venerable trophy-bearer,  
you are wedded to the Word of the immortal Father, O glorious Juliana.  
For having wisely disdained your mortal bridegroom,  
you strove beyond nature to destroy the serpent, //  
and now you delight in the joys of your Bridegroom!

### **Tone 1 Kontakion** *(St. Juliana)*

You were a beautiful virgin, wise Juliana,  
and as your soul was wounded with divine love,  
your body was also pierced with the wounds of martyrdom  
adorning you as a bride of Christ and His martyr.  
Now as you dwell in the heavenly bridal chamber, //  
you pray for us all.

### **Tone 1 Kontakion** *(Fathers)*

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha!  
The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in her  
womb.  
The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him, //  
and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

### **Tone 2 Kontakion** *(Forefeast)*

He Who holds the earth in the hollow of His hand  
now is beheld in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling bands.  
We offer prefestal hymns to his Mother, who maternally rejoices //  
having held to her bosom the Son of God.

### **Tone 4 Prokeimenon** *(Holy Fathers)*

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, / and praised and glorified is  
Thy Name forever! *(Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 3)*  
*V. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! (v. 4)*

### Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40 (Epistle, Sunday Before the Nativity)

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

#### Tone 4

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*V. We have heard with our ears, O God, for our fathers have told us.  
(Ps. 43:1a)*

*V. For Thou hast saved us from them that oppose us, and hast put to shame them that hate us. (Ps. 43:8)*

### Matthew 1:1-25 (Gospel, Sunday Before the Nativity)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot 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, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'" Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

## Explanation of Today's Gospel Reading Matthew 1:17-25

By Blessed Theophylact  
Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

**17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.** He divides the generations into three [different] conditions [of leadership], to show the Jews that although they were ruled by judges, as they were until David, and by kings, as they were until the deportation, and by priests, as they were until Christ, yet it did not benefit them at all in acquiring virtue; but they were in need of the true Judge and King and Priest, Who is Christ. For when the line of their rulers had failed, then Christ came, in accordance with the prophecy of Jacob. (Genesis 49:10)

**18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.** Why did God permit her to be betrothed, and thus give men any cause at all for suspicion that Joseph had come together with her? So that she would have a protector in hardships; for Joseph took care of her during the flight to Egypt and preserved her. She was betrothed for another reason: to escape the notice of the devil. For the devil had heard that the Virgin would conceive, (Isaiah 7:14) and was keeping the Virgin under his surveillance. So that the deceiver might be deceived, Joseph betrothed the Ever-virgin, outwardly appearing to be her spouse, but not so in actual deed.

**19. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.** The law decreed the adulteress be pilloried, that is, exposed and punished publicly. How, then, was Joseph righteous since he intended to cover up her sin and thus to transgress the law? The answer is, first, that he was righteous for intending to do this very thing. He did not wish to be harsh, but in his great goodness took compassion on her, showing himself to be above the law, and already living in a manner superior to the decrees of the law. Secondly, since he himself knew that she had conceived of the Holy Spirit, he did not wish to pillorize and abuse her who had conceived not by adultery but of the Holy Spirit. Behold what the evangelist says: "She was found to be with child." Found by whom? By Joseph, that is, he discerned that she had conceived of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he "was minded to divorce her secretly," for he no longer dared to take as a wife her who had been deemed worthy of such grace.

**20. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.** When the righteous Joseph was uncertain, then the angel appeared in order to show him what to do. The angel appeared to him in a dream, because Joseph had great faith. How could Joseph not believe, when the angel spoke to him of matters that were in his mind and that he had not revealed to anyone? For it says, "while he pondered," but did not speak of, these things, the angel appeared to him. It was right that he believed the angel to be of God, for it is the attribute of God to know the things that are unspoken. Joseph son of David. The angel called him "son of David" to remind him that the prophets had foretold that the Christ would come from the seed of David. It is as if the angel were saying to him, "Do not doubt, but remember David who received the promise concerning Christ." Fear not to take unto thee. Here he shows that Joseph was afraid to keep her, lest he spurn God by harboring an adulteress. Or, in another sense, "Fear not," that is, "Though you fear to touch her who has conceived of the Holy Spirit, do not fear to take her unto thee, that is, to keep her within your house." For in his thoughts and deliberations he had already divorced her. Mary thy wife. This means, you perhaps think that she is an adulteress. But I say to you that she is your wife, that is, she has not been corrupted by anyone, but she is your own betrothed. For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. Not only is she acquitted of any unlawful union, but she has conceived in some divine and wondrous manner. Therefore, you ought rather to rejoice because of this.

**21. And she will bring forth a Son,** So that no one could ask, "How can I believe you that she has conceived of the Holy Spirit?" The angel speaks of the future, saying that she shall bear a son. "For if I tell the truth in this matter, it is clear that what I said concerning her conception of the Holy Spirit is also true." The angel did not say, "She shall bear you a son," but simply, "She shall bear a son." For Mary did not bring forth for Joseph's sake, but for the whole world; nor did this grace concern him alone, but it was poured out on all. **And you shall call His name Jesus.** "You shall call," as though you were His father, and as the protector of the Virgin. For you must not think, Joseph, that because the conception is of the Holy Spirit that you can leave the Virgin helpless, but rather you will serve her in all things. **For He will save His people from their sins.** Here he interprets the name "Jesus", showing that it means "Savior". The angel says that Jesus will save His people, not only the Jewish people, but also the Gentiles who are eager to believe and to become His people. From whom will He save them? Perhaps from enemies? No, but from their sins. Hence it is clear that it is God Who will be born, for it is the attribute

of God alone to forgive sins.

**22-23. So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'" The Jews say that it is not written in the prophecy "virgin" but "young woman". To which it may be answered that "young woman" and "virgin" mean the same thing in Scripture, for in Scripture "young woman" refers to one who is still a virgin. Furthermore, if it was not a virgin that gave birth, how would it be a sign, something extraordinary? Listen to Isaiah who says, "For this reason the Lord Himself shall give you a sign," and immediately he adds, "Behold, the Virgin" So if it were not a virgin that would give birth, it would not be a sign. The Jews, then, alter the text of Scripture in their malice, putting "young woman" instead of "virgin". **And shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.** The Jews say, "How then is it that He was not called Emmanuel but Jesus Christ?" One may answer, "The prophet did not say 'You shall call,' but 'They shall call.'" That is, the events and deeds of His life will show that He is God and that He keeps company with us. For Holy Scripture gives names that are derived from the events of one's life.**

**24. Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife.** Behold a wakeful, vigilant soul who immediately obeyed. **And took to him as his wife.** The evangelist continually calls her "the wife of Joseph" to allay evil suspicion and to show that she was not anyone else's wife but Joseph's.

**25. And knew her not until she had brought forth.** That is, he never came together with her at all. "Until" here does not mean that before the birth he did not know her and afterwards he did, but that he absolutely never knew her. Scripture employs this expression. For example, the raven "returned not unto the ark until the water had dried off from the earth." But neither did it return after the water had dried off. Again, "I am with you until the end of the world." So after the end He will no longer be with the saints? But how can that be? For at that time more than ever will He be with them. So must you understand here "until she brought forth" to mean, neither before the birth nor after the birth did he know her. How could he have touched the Holy Virgin having once understood the ineffable birth giving? **Her firstborn son.** The evangelist does not call Him "her firstborn son" in the sense that she later gave birth to a second son, but simply that He was the first and only child that she bore. For Christ is both the "firstborn" by having been born first, and the

"only begotten", in that He had no brother. **And he called His name Jesus.** And here, too, he shows Joseph's ready obedience to do everything that the angel had told him to do.

#### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*  
Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just! *(Ps. 32:1)*  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!