

✠Bulletin✠

Week of December 28th to January 3, 2026

Sunday after the Nativity of Christ
By St. John of Kronstadt



Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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29th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 4
Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Tone 4. Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord.

Afterfeast of the Nativity. Sunday after Nativity.

The 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia, including: Glycerius, Zeno, Theophilus, Dorotheus, Mardonius, Migdonius, Indes, Gorgonius, Peter, Euthymius, and the Virgins: Agape, Domna and Theophila (302). Ven. Ignatii of Lomsk (Vologdá—1591). Apostle Nicanor the Deacon (38 A.D.). Ven. Simeon the Myrrhgusher, of Mt. Athos (1287).

Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

Sunday December 28th

9:15 am - Hours

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

Thursday January 1, 2026

8:45 am- Hours

9:00 am – Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Circumcision of Christ & St. Basil the Great

Weekly Schedule

Sunday December 28th

- Choir Practice
- Inquirers & Catechism classes following Liturgy

Today we have two feasts: the feast of the Nativity of Christ is joined with the feast of the Resurrection of Christ; one is an annual feast, the other a weekly feast. In both feasts, beloved brethren, is hidden our own Christian triumph. Jesus Christ was born and resurrected for us: He was born in order to die for us and to rise again. Such is the love of God the Savior for us: He gave Himself entirely to us, if only to make us eternally blessed, if only to lead us into the abodes of the heavenly Father. The life of our Lord Jesus Christ – from His birth to His suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, is, so to speak, a mirror in which is reflected all that happens and will happen to His followers, or, in other words, His entire earthly life is a model of our life, as it should be. Therefore, His birth is, as it were, our birth – and it is, precisely, only for us – His resurrection is our resurrection.

Through the birth and resurrection of the Savior, we all, beloved, are called to eternal life, to an incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven for our sake. Without the Savior, without His birth, our birth would only be a curse, so that our resurrection without Him would become a condemnation to eternal torment. By His birth, Jesus Christ sanctified our birth, exalted our horn; through His resurrection, He made us glad with the hope of our resurrection. “Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20), that is, He laid the foundation for our resurrection. Here is our triumph in the birth and resurrection of Christ!

But why do we celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Christ once a year, and the feast of the Resurrection many times, and one of them - the annual one - so brightly, with such solemnity, that its light seems to eclipse all other feasts? In order to resolve this question, let us take another to explain it. Is it necessary to assure a person several times that he was born? It is not necessary, because everyone believes this without assurance. But is it necessary to assure a person many times that he will rise again? It is absolutely necessary, because since the resurrection will still happen and it is only in our hope, then it is necessary to resurrect more often, to revive our fading faith in the resurrection and hope for it; and even more so, there are fewer examples of resurrection we see before our eyes, while examples of birth are always before our eyes. To this reason we must add the fact that the year represents the human age, and since the Son of God, Jesus Christ, became the Son of man and, without time, was subjected to the measurement of earthly years, we remember once a year all the great events

in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they once actually happened, and this single memory is enough to revive our faith in them, while the resurrection of Christ, in addition to its all-bright, annual celebration, is celebrated many more times a year in order to more often revive in people the faith in the general resurrection, which is the great triumph of our faith, because the resurrection of Christ is our resurrection: "You were raised with Christ" (Col. 3:1), says the Apostle, i.e. you were, as it were, resurrected together with Christ.

And so, glory to the Lord who was born for our salvation, and glory to Him who rose from the grave and resurrected us with Himself.

What shall I say to you in conclusion? Remember, all of you, with each coming resurrection, that you will rise again and, having risen, will appear at the judgment; and therefore, each of you, take care to arrange your life so that at that terrible Judgment you will not be disgraced and not sent into outer darkness, and so that the feasts of the Nativity and Resurrection of Christ will not condemn us in that age for our inattention and disrespect for their words. Amen.

14,000 Infants (the Holy Innocents) slain by Herod at Bethlehem

14,000 Holy Infants were killed by King Herod in Bethlehem. When the time came for the Incarnation of the Son of God and His Birth of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Magi in the East beheld a new star in the heavens, foretelling the Nativity of the King of the Jews. They journeyed immediately to Jerusalem to worship the Child, and the star showed them the way. Having worshipped the divine Infant, they did not return to Jerusalem to Herod, as he had ordered them, but being warned by God in a dream, they went back to their country by another way. Herod finally realized that his scheme to find the Child would not be successful, and he ordered that all the male children two years old and younger at Bethlehem and its surroundings be killed. He thought that the divine Infant, Whom he considered a rival, would be among the dead children.

The Christian Church very rightly proclaimed these murdered children as Saints, because they died at an innocent age, and were, in some way, the first martyrs of Christianity. They may not have been baptized in water, but they were baptized in the blessed blood of their martyrdom.

Schedule of Weekly Services

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.

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.

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Prayer Requests

Anne and Scott Peatross

Nicholas Kowalski

James Clark – Parishioner of St. Herman’s

Carolyn – Robert & Debra’s Forster’s daughter

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

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

Tone 4 Troparion *(Resurrection)*

When the women disciples of the Lord

learned from the angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection,

they cast away the ancestral curse

and elatedly told the apostles:

“Death is overthrown!

Christ God is risen,//

granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 4 Troparion *(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!

Tone 2 Troparion *(Righteous Ones)*

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph,
to David, the ancestor of God;
you have seen a Virgin great with child;
and you gave glory with the shepherds;
you worshipped with the Magi,
and received the news from the Angel.//
Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Tone 3 Kontakion *(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!"

Tone 3 Kontakion *(Feast of the Nativity)*

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.

Tone 4 Prokeimenon *(Resurrection)*

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; / in wisdom hast Thou made them all.
(Ps. 103:24)

*V. Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, Thou art very great!
(Ps. 103:1)*

Tone 4 Prokeimenon *(Righteous Ones)*

God is wonderful in His saints, / the God of Israel. *(Ps. 67:36a)*

Galatians 1:11-19 (Epistle, Sunday After the Nativity)

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.

Tone 4

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*V. Go forth, prosper and reign, for the sake of meekness,
righteousness and truth! (Ps. 45:5a)*

V. For Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity. (Ps. 44:8a)

Tone 4

V. Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness! (Ps. 131:1)

Matthew 2:13-23 (Gospel, Sunday After the Nativity)

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.”

Explanation of Today’s Gospel Reading Matthew 2:13-23

By Blessed Theophylact
Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

13 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.” Do you see now the reason why God permitted the Virgin to be betrothed? It is revealed to you here: that Joseph might care for her and watch over her. The angel did not say, “take your wife” but “take the mother of the Child.” For once his suspicion had been allayed, and the righteous man had understood from the miracles attendant at His birth that everything was of the Holy Spirit, the angel no longer calls her Joseph’s “wife”. And flee into Egypt. Even the Lord flees, to confirm that He was truly man. For if He had fallen into the hands of Herod and had not been slain, it would have seemed that He had been made flesh only in appearance. He flees into Egypt to sanctify even that place. For there were two lands that were the workshops of every iniquity: Babylon and Egypt. By means of the Magi, He accepted the adoration of Babylon, and Egypt He sanctified by His own presence. **And stay there until I bring you word.** Remain there until you receive God’s command. So, we too should do nothing apart from the will of God. **For Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.** Behold the foolishness of a man who labors to prevail against the will of God. For if it is not of God, what do you fear? But if it is of God, how can you destroy the Child?

14-15. 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.” The Jews say that this was said of the people whom Moses led out of Egypt. We reply, is it anything remarkable that something which was spoken of the people in type as a foreshadowing, was realized by Christ in truth? Furthermore, who is the Son of God? The Hebrew people who worshipped the idols and carvings of Belphegor, or He Who truly is the Son of God?

16. 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. As God used Moses to trick Pharaoh, so too, He used the Magi to trick Herod. For both Herod and Pharaoh were child slayers: Pharaoh slew the male children of the Hebrews in Egypt, and Herod slew the male children of the Hebrews in Bethlehem. Herod vents his wrath against the Magi upon those who had wronged him in nothing. Why were the children allowed to be slaughtered? So that Herod’s wickedness might be revealed. But perhaps you will ask me, “Why did the children suffer wrong to show Herod’s wickedness?” Listen then. They were not wronged but were made worthy of crowns. For anyone who suffers some evil here, suffers either so that his sins might be absolved, or so that his crowns might be multiplied. So it is with these children; for their suffering they will receive a greater crown in heaven. **And in all the region thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had carefully ascertained of the Magi.**

17. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: Lest anyone think that the slaying of the children took place against the will of God, the evangelist shows that God both knew of it beforehand and foretold it.

18. A voice was heard in Ramah. Ramah is a place in Palestine of high elevation, for the name itself means “high”. This place fell by lot to the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin, who was the son of Rachel, and Rachel was buried in Bethlehem. By “Rachel”, therefore, the prophet Jeremiah means “Bethlehem”, for Rachel was buried in Bethlehem. (Gen 35:19) He is saying that weeping and lamentation will be heard from on high. Listen to what the prophet says: **Lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children,** that is, Bethlehem weeping for its children, **and would not be comforted, because they are not.** In this life they are no more, but their souls are immortal.

19. But when Herod was dead. Herod came to a bitter end. For with fever, torment of the bowels, itching, swelling of the feet, rotting of the private parts, breeding of worms, difficulty in breathing, trembling and spasms in every member, he cast off his evil soul.

19-20. 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, He did not say “flee” but “go”, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead. ¹ Where is Apollinarius, who said that the Lord did not have the soul of a man? For here he is reproved.

¹ This false teaching of Apollinarius was condemned as heresy at the Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 381 A.D. The Greek word in the Gospel here translated as “soul” is *psyche*. It means literally “the breath of life” and can be variously translated into English as “soul” or “life”, depending on the context. The same is true of the Latin word *anima*, from which we derive the word “animate”.

21-22. 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. Herod left three sons: Philip, Antipas, and Archelaus. He had directed Archelaus to be king, and the other two, tetrarchs. Joseph was afraid to go into the land of Israel, that is, Judea, because Archelaus was similar to Herod, his father. Antipas was the young Herod who slew the Forerunner, St. John the Baptist. **And being warned by God in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee.** Galilee was not of the land of Israel, but of the Gentiles, and for this reason the Jews considered the Galileans an abomination.

23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. How is it that Luke says that after the Lord was born, He completed the forty days, was held in the arms of Simeon, and then went down to Nazareth? But here Matthew says that after the return from Egypt He went to Nazareth? Learn, therefore, that Luke spoke those things on which Matthew was silent. I will give an example: after the birth, He completed the forty days and then went down to Nazareth. This is what Luke says. Matthew speaks of what took place afterwards, that He fled into Egypt, and then returned from Egypt to Nazareth. They do not contradict each other. One of them, Luke, speaks of the descent from Bethlehem to Nazareth, while the other, Matthew, speaks of the return from Egypt to Nazareth, which took place later. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”** Which prophet

said this? It is not to be found now. For many books have been lost, because of both the carelessness of the Hebrews and the frequent captivities. But perhaps this was an unwritten prophecy among the Jews. “Nazarene” means “sanctified” and as the Christ is holy, it is right that He is called “a Nazarene”. For by many prophets the Lord was called “The Holy-One of Israel”. (Ps 88:19, Isaiah 1:4, etc)

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

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

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!