

Ambo

ST. THEODOSIUS ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL



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December 24, 2006

28th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday before the Nativity

Eve of the Nativity

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

- Archpriest John Zdinak
Dean
- Archpriest Pavel Soucek
Retired/Attached
- Protodeacon Peter Homik
Fell asleep in the Lord 12/15/06
- Subdeacon Theodore Lentz
Sacristan
- Reader Julius Kovach
Ecclesiarch & Choirmaster

Divine Services

Eve Sundays & Feast Days

5:00 PM Confessions

6:00 PM Great Vespers

Sundays and Feast Days

8:40 AM 3rd and 6th Hour

9:00 AM Divine Liturgy



Our Lord Jesus Christ,

the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city's inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

"I behold a strange and most glorious mystery," the Church sings with awe, "Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid." (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three shepherds watching their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord (St Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good

tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the



salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magi by a wondrous star. St John Chrysostom and St Theophylactus, commenting on St Matthew's Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was "a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star." St Demetrius of Rostov says it was a "manifestation of divine energy" (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi "fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt. 2:11).

The present Feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, "Brethren, observe the feastdays; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month." In another place it also says, "Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world."

In the second century St Clement of Alexandria also indicates that the day of the Nativity of Christ is December 25. In the third century St Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of St Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia (December 28) were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church. There is evidence of this in the works of St Ephraim the Syrian, St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Ambrose of Milan, St John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church of the fourth century.

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ZOE
FOR LIFE
An Orthodox Christian Initiative
3352 Mayfield Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118
440/893-9990
hotline number 877/436-LIFE (5433)
www.zoeforlifeonline.org

- * Dedication of ZOE House on Sunday, January 21, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. at 5935 State Road, Parma. RSVP to Kathy by January 10th at 440-842-6639.
- * January 22, 2007 bus to the Annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. 4:00 am ZOE House. Contact Kathy to reserve your seat at 440-842-6639.
- * Zoe needs you! Call Paula at 440-893-9990, or Iryna at 440-582-1051 to volunteer at ZOE for Life.

Thank you to everyone who baked and/or otherwise contributed toward making the St. Mary's Altar Society **COOKIE SALE** a success - a **\$4,070** success! This sum will put the Cathedral Roof Fund over \$40,000, or over 80% of goal! Special thanks to the volunteers who participated in the group baking sessions that ensured the kolachky would not sell out by 10 am (they lasted much longer this year and made many more satisfied customers!). What began as an Altar Society endeavor became a major fundraiser with the united effort of everyone in the Parish. God bless all who helped in any way!

Thank You for Your Continuing Donations to the Cathedral Roof Fund. As of December 17, 2006, \$36,747 has been collected toward our goal of \$50,000.

A heartfelt collective thank you to all who so positively represented the St. Theodosius congregation to the public last Sunday during the Cathedral Open House and 30th Annual Christmas Concert.

FOCA Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 26, 2006
@ Mapleside Farms in Brunswick.

A \$1 gift exchange will also happen.
Call Darrell Felon for reservations & more info. 440.238.3837.

Christmas Outreach

Someone once told me that if St. Theodosius parishioners know where their giving is going, they can be quite generous. The Angel Tree program was an overwhelming example of this. **THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH!!!** All gifts were delivered to the Church on time, many children received several gifts on their lists, and it was a JOY to take all the goods to Merrick House for distribution! May God richly bless everyone who participated!

Daniel Morris, Charities Committee

Cleveland Deanery
OVERNIGHT

TEEN RETREAT & LOCK-IN

Friday – Saturday
December 29 – 30, 2006
8:00 p.m. Friday until 10:00 a.m. Saturday
at
St. Michael's Russian Orthodox Church Gymnasium

Presentation: "What Type of Person Was Christ?"



COOK-OUT



IC XC



BASKETBALL



BONFIRE



GAMES



SPORTS



MUSIC

For details and registration contact your Youth Coordinator or St. Michael's at 440-526-5192. Deadline for Registration is December 22.

Hosted by St. Michael's Russian Orthodox Church
5025 E. Mill Road, Broadview Heights, OH 44147
440-526-5192

The Nativity Sermon of St John Chrysostom

"I behold a new and wondrous mystery!

My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn!

The angels sing!

The archangels blend their voices in harmony!

The cherubim resound their joyful praise!

The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead herein... on earth and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy!

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice!

Ask not how this is accomplished, for where God wills, the order of nature is overturned. For He willed He had the powers He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God.

Today He Who Is, is born ! And He Who Is becomes what He was not! For when He was God, He became man-while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His...

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominions, nor

powers, nor principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold kings have come, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; Women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a



woman so that He might change the pains of childbirth into joy; Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin...

Infants, that they may adore Him who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; Children, to the Child who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod; Men, to Him who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants;

Shepherds, to the Good Shepherd who was laid down His life for His sheep;

Priests, to Him who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek;

Servants, to Him who took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom (Philippians 2:7);

Fishermen, to the Fisher of humanity;

Publicans, to Him who from among them named a chosen evangelist;

Sinful women, to Him who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant woman;

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp nor with the music of the pipes nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ!

For this is all my hope!

This is my life!

This is my salvation!

This is my pipe, my harp!

And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels and shepherds, sing:

"Glory to God in the Highest! and on earth peace to men of good will! "