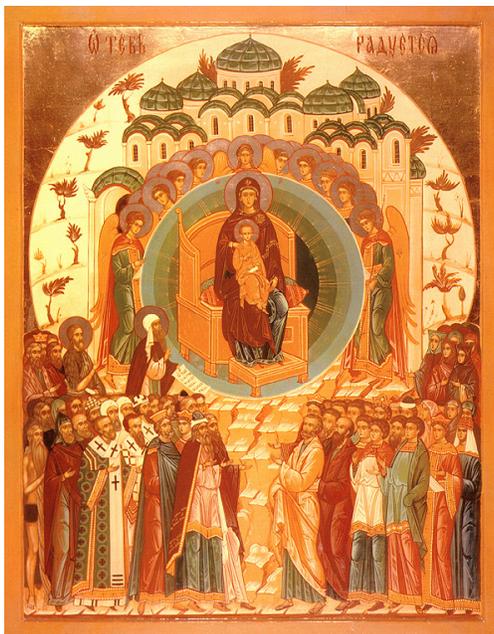


## Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos

On the second day of the feast, the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos is celebrated.

Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity - concretely and historically - is the humanity He received from Mary. His body is, first of all, her body. His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.



Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding us that the source and foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."

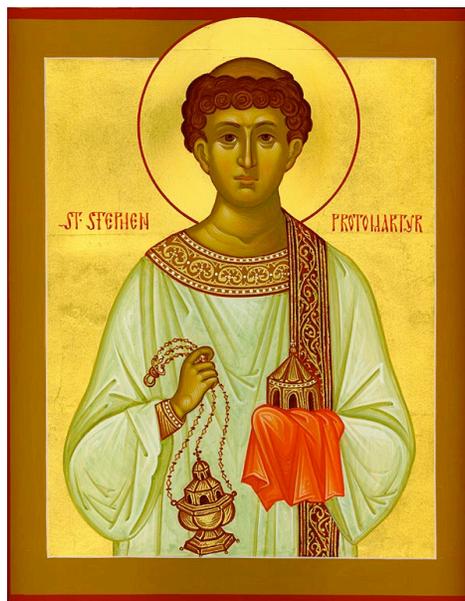
*Father Alexander Schmemmann, The Services of Christmas (1981).*



## Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen

Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called "archdeacon." He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty. In the words of Asterias, he was "the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel."

Filled with the Holy Spirit, St Stephen preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned St Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. St Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).



During his speech, St Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death St Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Protomartyr Stephen, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stephen on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

St Stephen is commemorated on December 27, August 2 (Translation of his relics) and September 15 (Uncovering of his relics in the year 415). ✨

## Prayer Requests

### Departed:

Charlotte Marko + 11/20/06  
Herbert Posnik + 11/24/06  
Protodeacon Peter Homik +12/15/06

### Ill-afflicted:

Helen Baldner  
Mary Marhefka  
John Clements  
Eileen Eschuk  
Henry & Julia Grabowski  
John & Ann Shuleva  
Jan Tkacz  
Jeanne Twitchell  
Billy J Spurlock  
James Sheehan  
Julia Zimmerman  
Mary Wazevich  
Valentina Ponomarenko  
Natalie Ponomarenko  
Roy A. Baldner  
Michael & Jennifer Turczyk  
Helen Kozak  
Nick Jarachovic  
Marshall Prock

Maura & Will Oprisko & Unborn Child  
Emily & Jason Grimes & Unborn Child

## Parish Council News

☛ The next Parish Council Meeting is 6:00 PM, *Thursday, January 25, 2006 @ Ridge Manor*. Any parish member is welcome.

## Upcoming Events

- 🕯 December 26 - FOCA party @ Mapleside Farms
- 🕯 December 27-29 - Parish Teen Retreat
- 🕯 December 29-30 - Teen Retreat @ St. Michael's
- 🕯 January 21 - 30E House dedication & blessing
- 🕯 January 22 - 30E for Life bus to Washington DC
- 🕯 January 26 - Tatiana Ball @ St. Sergius in Parma
- 🕯 January 28 - Chicken Paprikash Dinner @ St. Michael's

*Thank you for all of your cards, prayers and generous gifts given in memory of Fr. Peter.  
- Mat. Jeanne Homik & family*

Now we don't want you, my brothers, to be in any doubt about those who "fall asleep" in death, or to grieve over them like men who have no hope. After all, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again from death, then we can believe that God will just as surely bring with Jesus all who are "asleep" in Him.  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

**JOIN THE GREETERS MINISTRY IN 2007. CALL MICHAEL TABELING AT 216.521.9418 OR WRITE [m.tabeling@att.net](mailto:m.tabeling@att.net) TO LEARN MORE**

## AMBO MAILING INFORMATION

Please review your records and make sure that your AMBO subscription is up to date! Recall that we ask for a \$25/year contribution to defray the cost of postage.

Write [ambo@sttheodosius.org](mailto:ambo@sttheodosius.org) to subscribe to the AMBO.PDF e-mail list - fast and FREE.

## Coffee Hour & Greeters Schedules

### Coffee Hour Hosts:

12/24 Maca Tyler  
12/31 Donna Jacak  
1/7/07 Mary Swit, Tammy Ponomarenko  
1/14 Dan & Lavinia Morris  
1/21 Joyce Tabeling  
1/28 Patti Sankovic, Natalia Pricinovskis

### Greeters:

Mike Tabeling & Karen Felon  
Linda Smotzer

### 2006 Dues

**\$250.00 per Adult member (18 and older)**

*continued from page 2*

St John Chrysostom, in a sermon which he gave in the year 385, points out that the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is ancient, and indeed very ancient. In this same century, at the Cave of Bethlehem, made famous by the Birth of Jesus Christ, the empress St Helen built a church, which her mighty son Constantine adorned after her death. In the Codex of the emperor Theodosius from 438, and of the emperor Justinian in 535, the universal celebration of the day of the Nativity of Christ was decreed by law. Thus, Nicephorus Callistus, a writer of the fourteenth century, says in his History that in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian established the celebration of the Nativity of Christ throughout all the world.

Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople in the fifth century, Sophronius and Andrew of Jerusalem in the seventh, Sts John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maium and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople in the eighth, the Nun Cassiane in the ninth, and others whose names are unknown, wrote many sacred hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which are still sung by the Church on this radiant festival.

During the first three centuries, in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Cyprus, the Nativity of Christ was combined together with the Feast of His Baptism on January 6, and called "Theophany" ("Manifestation of God"). This was because of a belief that Christ was baptized on anniversary of His birth, which may be inferred from St John Chrysostom's sermon on

the Nativity of Christ: "it is not the day on which Christ was born which is called Theophany, but rather that day on which He was baptized."

In support of such a view, it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23) when

*The angel said to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you 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."*

He was baptized. The joint celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Theophany continued to the end of the fourth century in certain Eastern Churches, and until the fifth or sixth century in others.

The present order of services preserves the memory of the ancient joint celebration of the Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany. On the eve of both Feasts, there is a similar tradition that one should fast until the stars appear. The order of divine services on the eve of both feastdays and the feastdays themselves is the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world. The angel said to the shepherds, "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. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, glorifying God and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Those who heard these things were astonished at what the shepherds told them concerning the Child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:10-20).

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is a cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind, "for the Savior is Born!"

Concurring with the witness of the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, in their God-inspired writings, describe the Feast of the Nativity of Christ as most profound, and joyous, serving as the basis and foundation for all the other Feasts.

**Christ is Born!  
Glorify Him!**



## Weekly Schedule

**Sunday December 24**

**28th Sunday After Pentecost**

**Sunday Before the Nativity**

**Eve of the Nativity**

*9:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

*6:00 PM Vigil of the Nativity*

**Monday December 25**

**Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ**

*9:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

*6:00 PM Great Vespers*

**Tuesday December 26**

**Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos**

*9:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

*6:00 PM FOCA dinner at Mapleside Farms*

**Wednesday December 27**

**Protomartyr Stephen**

*9:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

**Thursday December 28**

**Friday December 29**

**Saturday December 30**

*6:00 PM Great Vespers*

**Sunday December 31**

**29th Sunday After Pentecost**

**Sunday After the Nativity**

**Leave-taking of the Nativity**

*9:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

*6:00 PM Great Vespers*

**Monday January 1**

**Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ**

*9:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

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



**St. Theodosius Orthodox Cathedral**

**8200 Biddulph Rd**

**Brooklyn, OH 44144**

*Addressee*