

## ST. JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

MELKITE GREEK- CATHOLIC CHURCH  
130 ST. FRANCIS CABBINI AVENUE ✱ SCRANTON, PA 18504

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### PRAYER INTENTIONS

P. H. S.: Rev. Dn. Joseph Daratony. Michael Abda. Marie Barron. Nikki Boudreaux. George Bales Sr. Lucille Bales. Jayne Buckley. Chris Carey. John Coury. Maryann Nappi Donahue. Carol Downer. David Fairclough, Sr. Robert Fairclough, Sr. Sara Gomez. Niko Mayashairo. Mary McNeilly. Sue Solsman. Susan Vieselmeyer. Dean & Sherry Yockey. **MEMORY ETERNAL:** ✱Rev. Char. Aboody. ✱Rev. Mich. Jolly. ✱Rev. Jos. Francavilla. ✱Rev. Theo. Leonarczyk ✱Rev. Frank Milienewicz ✱Dn. John Karam. ✱Marie Abda. ✱Charlotte Abda. ✱James Abda. ✱Marie Abda. ✱Nancy Abda. ✱Paul Bauman. ✱A.J. Bolus. ✱Nicholas Cianci. ✱Patricia Cimakosky. ✱Ann Coury. ✱Mary Sue Betress. ✱Cecilia Davidson ✱Marg.t Dillenburg ✱Eric Jolly. ✱Jos. King ✱Blakely Landell. ✱Elaine Manuele. ✱Frank Milewski, Sr. ✱Frank Milewski, Jr. ✱Mary L. Mooty. ✱Karen Murray. ✱Marie Patchoski. ✱Anth. Simon. ✱Bill Simon. ✱Ruth Sirgany. ✱Mary A. Walsh. ✱Gen. Zaydon

### CLERGY:

Rev. Christopher Manuele, Presbyter

### DIVINE SERVICES:

Wednesday :

Compline ..... 7:30 P.M

Saturday:

Great Vespers: ..... 3:15 P.M

Sunday:

Orthros ..... 9:00 A.M.

Divine Liturgy: ..... 10:00 A.M.

Holy Days:

Eve: Great Vespers: .... 5:30 P.M.

Day: Divine Liturgy ... 5:30 P.M

### HOLY MYSTERY OF CONFESSION:

Before Vespers at 3:00 P.M.; following any service; or by appointment.

### HOLY ANOINTING OF THE SICK:

Following services /call the Rectory.

### HOLY MYSTERY OF CROWNING:

Call rectory at earliest convenience.

### PARISH ADVISORY COUNCIL:

Meetings as scheduled.

## SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY JOSEPH THE BETROTHED, DAVID THE KING, JAMES THE BROTHER



*Icon of the Visit of the Magi*

# DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

26 DECEMBER 2021 ♦ TONE 06 EOTHINON 09 † SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY / ST. JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

GREAT DOXOLOGY:

ANTIPHONS:

FIRST:

SECOND:

THIRD: *Beatitudes*

ENTRANCE HYMN:

APOLYTIKIA:

*Resurrection (Tone 6)*

*Nativity of Our Lord*

*St. Joseph the Betrothed*

KONDAKION: *Nativity*

TRISAGION:

PROKIMENON: *(Tone 6)*

EPISTLE:

*Brethren*, I give you to understand that the Good News that was announced to you by me is not of man. For I did not receive it from man, nor was it taught to me [by man], but I received it by a revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have heard of the way I lived before in Judaism: how I persecuted the Church of God and ravaged it beyond measure. And I advanced in Judaism above many of my contemporaries in my nation, showing much more zeal for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased him who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately, without taking counsel with flesh and blood and without going up to Jerusalem to those who were appointed apostles before me, I retired into Arabia and again returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and I remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles, except James, the Lord’s brother.

ALLELUIA:

O Lord, remember David and all his anxious care! † The Lord has made a truthful oath to David from which he shall never depart: “Of the fruit of your loins, I will place one upon your throne.”

GOSPEL:

When the Magi had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying, “Arise, and take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and remain there until I tell thee. For Herod will seek the child to destroy him.” So, he arose, and took the child and his mother by night, and withdrew into Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod; that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” Then Herod, seeing that he had been tricked by the Magi, was exceedingly angry; and he sent and slew all the boys in Bethlehem and all its neighborhood who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the Magi. Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, “A voice was heard in Rama, weeping and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted, because they are no more.” But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” So, he arose and took the child and his mother, and went into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there; and being warned in a dream he withdrew into the region of Galilee. And he went and settled in a town called Nazareth; that there might be fulfilled what was spoken through the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

HIRMOS:

KINONIKON:

COMMUNION

HYMNS AFTER COMMUNION

*Liturgy Book p. 1*

*Liturgy Book p. 29*

*Liturgy Book p. 32*

*Liturgy Book p. 125*

*Liturgy Book p. 38*

*Liturgy Book p. 44*

*Liturgy Book p. 152*

*Liturgy Book p. 47*

*Liturgy Book p. 153*

*Liturgy Book p. 50*

*Liturgy Book p. 59*

*Galatians 1:11-19*

*St. Matthew 2:13-23*

*Liturgy Book p. 154*

*Liturgy Book p. 155*

*Liturgy Book p. 87*

*Liturgy Book p. 89*

*shall enjoy the tree of life in paradise, with Adam and all the righteous.”*

The hymn is built upon a pair of images taken from the Scriptures. In the story of creation in Genesis the Tree of Life was the giver of immortality from which fallen man could not be allowed to eat (see Gen 3:22). Were he to do so, Genesis suggests, sin would live forever. For us, however, Christ is the source of our immortality. He is the Tree of Life and, sinners through we are, we are called to eat of this Tree and live forever.

We also find the Tree of Life in the last chapter of Revelation, the last chapter of the Bible. There the Tree is in the center of the New Jerusalem, the ultimate Paradise. For St Augustine and other Fathers, “Paradise is the Church, as it is called in the Canticles... the Tree of life is the holy of holies, Christ...” (St Augustine The City of God). Christ, at the heart of the Church, gives us life through the Holy Spirit who works in the Church.

In the troparion Christ is also called the Fruit of this Tree planted in the spiritual paradise of the Virgin’s womb. This brings us to the Gospel story of Christ’s conception where Mary’s cousin Elizabeth proclaims – with countless generations after her – “Blessed is the Fruit of your womb!” (Lk 1:42)

## Restoring the Likeness

Finally the troparion returns to the imagery in Genesis to give us the spiritual purpose of Christ’s incarnation. “Christ is coming forth to bring back to life the likeness that had been lost in the beginning.” Many Fathers saw in Gen 1:26 a key to understanding the mystery of our existence. There God resolves, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” They saw in the word image the range of qualities that set us apart from the lower creation: a resemblance to God in our nature. This remained in us after the fall, although in a damaged or scarred way. In the term likeness they saw the resemblance to God by our behavior, which had been lost through sin. We may still look somewhat like God (the image in us) but we surely don’t act like Him.

In His own person Christ is the perfect likeness to God. “He who sees me sees the Father,” we read in Jn 14:9. He is the new Adam, who starts humanity anew in Himself and gives us a share in His renewed nature. In His incarnation He assumed our human nature so that we might share in His divine likeness. In the words of the patristic adage, “God became man so that man might become God.”

If they knew the Christmas tree as the symbol of Christ, the Tree of Life, secularists might happily welcome the mangers and cribs and shepherds and animals of the creche in the public sector and strive to banish Christmas trees instead!

# CHRISTMAS TREES AND THE GOSPEL

Christmas Trees and the Gospel of Christ CHRISTMAS TREES ARE EVERY-WHERE: in homes and churches, parks and stores, offices and government buildings. In an age when people have fought to keep crèches in (or out of) public spaces, few seem to have challenged the presence of Christmas trees in those same venues. After all, the crèche is “religious” and the tree is not. Right?

As to its origin, that statement is true. The decorated trees introduced in Estonia and Latvia in the fifteenth century had no Christian significance. They were the focus for revelry: people sang and danced around the tree much as the English did around the maypole. The first decorations were tidbits – fruit, nuts, paper flowers – which the children were given on Christmas Day. In Germany and other European countries where a non-liturgical Protestantism was dominant, there was little in the way of religious customs on the holiday. The Christmas tree, which spread from Germany into western Europe and eventually throughout the world, was more a symbol of holiday cheer than a commemoration of the nativity of Christ.

## The Tree of Life

What opponents of Christian Christmas symbols do not realize, however, is that the tree was a symbol of Christ long before the Germans introduced it into their holiday observances. Furthermore, it is a more richly symbolic presentation of our faith in Christ than the merely historic picture painted in crèches. It not only says that Christ has come; it proclaims what His coming means for us.

During the last week of the Nativity Fast, a kind of “holy week” observed before Christmas in the Christian East, we sing the following troparion at every service:

*Bethlehem, make ready for Eden has been opened for all. Ephrata, be alert for the Tree of Life has blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb had become a spiritual Paradise, wherein the divine Fruit was planted – and if we eat of it we shall live and not die like Adam. Christ is coming forth to bring back to life the likeness that had been lost in the beginning.*

Like much of our liturgical hymnody, this troparion incorporates a theme drawn from the writings of the Church Fathers. We find its imagery in the Commentary on Proverbs of the third-century Father, St Hippolytus of Rome:

*“The Fruit of righteousness and the Tree of Life is Christ. He alone, as man, fulfilled all righteousness. And with His own underived life He has brought forth the fruits of knowledge and virtue like a tree, whereof they that eat shall receive eternal life, and*

# SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

## EVENTS IN DECEMBER

Sunday, December 26th

**FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH THE BETROTHED**

*Resurrectional Orthros: 9:00 a.m.*

*Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.*

*Parish Potluck*

## EVENTS IN JANUARY

Saturday, January 1st

*Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.*

Saturday Evening, January 1st

*Confessions: 3:00 p.m.*

*Great Vespers: 3:15 p.m.*

*Divine Liturgy: 4:00 p.m.*

Sunday, January 2nd

*Resurrectional Orthros: 9:00 a.m.*

*Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.*

Wednesday, January 5th

*Great Vespers: 7:00 p.m.*

Tuesday, January 6th

**Theophany of Our Lord J. Christ**

*Festival Orthros: 9:00 a.m.*

*Divine Liturgy: 5:30 p.m.*

*Great Blessing of the Waters*

Saturday, January 8th

*Confessions: 3:00 p.m.*

*Great Vespers: 3:15 p.m.*

*Divine Liturgy 4:00 p.m.*

Sunday, January 9th

*Resurrectional orthros 9:00 a.m.*

*Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.*

*2021 Nativity Play*

## PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH

O St. Joseph, chaste spouse of the Lady Theotokos, head of the Holy Family, we again place ourselves under your patronage. † Through your powerful intercession, bestow up on us every good thing both spiritual and temporal. † Protect this your parish from all spiritual harm and renew in us the spirit of repentance and a fervent desire for the kingdom of heaven. † Make this vineyard flourish with new souls and by an increase of faith, hope and love; may forgiveness, peace and joy reign within our holy fellowship. † In all we do, may the Name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be glorified, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## 2021 WEEKLY COLLECTION

December 19

Weekly Offering:	\$ 585.00
Monthly:	\$ 65.00
Xtmas Flowers :	\$ 50.00
Candles:	\$ 25.00
Total:	\$ 725.00

*Thank you for your support!*

## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

- 1 January Nathan Cheffers ✕
- 2 January Russell & Kathleen Bateman ✕
- 08 January: Nathan Cheffers ✕
- 09 January: Ann T. Radgowski  
from James & Betsy Zaydon
- 23 January: ✕Genevieve Zaydon  
from Anne Clarice Zaydon

*Father Christopher will be away  
from December 26 thru December 31, 2021*



## DECEMBER 29: THE HOLY INNOCENTS

December 29 – The Holy Innocents ALL THE HISTORIC CHURCHES – Greek, Latin and Syriac – include in their liturgical observance of Christ’s nativity (although on different days) a remembrance of the cruel slaughter of the Holy Innocents, the young boys of Bethlehem and the surrounding area slain on the orders of King Herod the Great. In our calendar December 29 is devoted to commemorating this tragic event.

In the Gospel of St Matthew this episode is described as a result of the visit of the wise men who came seeking the newborn king of the Jews. After King Herod had consulted with the chief priests and scribes, he sent the wise men 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’”(Mt 2:8). The wise men found the Child, offered Him their gifts, but “...being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way” (Mt 2:12).

The Gospel continues: “ 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’” (Mt 2:16-18).

This passage in Matthew is the only reference in the Scriptures or in other records of the time to the slaughter of these children. This led many in the past two centuries to deny the historical character of the story. Others have pointed out that the tale perfectly reflects the character of Herod. At the beginning of his reign he had executed his second wife Mariamne, her brother and her mother as threats to his reign. In 7 BC Herod killed his own sons Alexander and Aristobolus for the same reason. In 4 BC his son Antipater suffered the same fate. In his *Saturnalia* the late pagan writer Macrobius (c.395-423) attributed the following remark on Herod’s reputation to the Emperor Augustus, “It is better to be Herod’s pig than his son.”

One reason why contemporary accounts do not mention the slaughter of the Innocents may be the insignificant number of boys killed. Although later descriptions number these victims in the thousands – one Coptic source refers to 144,000 – scholars today reckon the number to be no more than twenty or thirty, based on the estimated population of the area in the first century. We cannot imagine that the death of two or three dozen children would have attracted attention in an age in which thousands routinely died in earthquakes, invasions and the like.

### The Tears of Rachel

Matthew connects the death of the Innocents with “Rachel weeping for her children,” a reference which many today would not readily understand. Rachel, the wife of Jacob, was connected with Bethlehem in Jewish lore. She died giving birth to her son Benjamin “...and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which marks Rachel’s grave to this day” (Gen 35:19-20).

Rachel’s son Benjamin survived. Rachel did not live to weep for him. Rather the verse from Jeremiah quoted in the Gospel refers to Ramah, the area near Rachel’s grave to which Jews were driven for deportation to Babylon in the sixth century BC. Rachel “wept” for the children of Israel lost to her in the Babylonian exile; now she “weeps” for the Innocents.

### The Flight into Egypt

The Gospel tells us that, warned in a dream by an angel, Joseph took the Child and His Mother to Egypt, thus escaping Herod’s wrath (see Mt 2:13-15). By way of commentary, Matthew closes his mention of their stay in Egypt with the words of Hosea 11:1, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

Again, there is no other Scriptural mention of the Child Jesus in Egypt. Later writings describe in detail an elaborate itinerary through Gaza and Sinai and along the Nile to Old Cairo where the Lord and His family reputedly lived until the death of Herod. In some versions they are accompanied by St James, the Lord’s Brother; in others by Salome, His midwife. Many of the details of the journey of the Holy Family in Egypt are chronicled in a manuscript by Pope Theophilus of Alexandria (AD 384-412), who is said to have received these details during an apparition of the Holy Virgin. The Coptic Orthodox Church continues to distribute an “official map” marking the places they visited on their journey.

Most famous of the many shrines along this route are the Abu Sergha (St. Sergius) Church and the St Mary’s Church in Old Cairo. A nearby cave is reputedly the place which housed the Infant and His family.

A number of apocryphal writings from later periods describe this journey as a series of miracles wrought as the Lord passed through Egypt. Demons were expelled, the sick healed and idols shattered at the sight of Him. In one of these works, the sixth-century Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of Christ, an idol testifies before falling to the ground, “The unknown God is come, the One who is truly God; nor is there any one besides Him who is worthy of divine worship; for He is truly the Son of God” (Arabic Gospel 4:11).

### The New Moses, the New Israel

The passages in Matthew’s Gospel which speak of the slaughter of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt form what the Jews call a Midrash, or homiletic story: here, a kind of commentary on the identity of Christ. He is the King of the Jews, feared by the tyrant Herod but recognized by the Persian sages. He is the new Israel brought out of Egypt. He is the new Moses saved from slaughter as an infant as Moses was (see Ex 1:22 ff.). Then He was sent home when the danger was past, as Moses was, “Go, return to Egypt...for all the men who sought your life are dead” (Ex 4:19, all but reproduced in Mt 2:20). This prepares us to see the adult Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as the new Lawgiver, giving added depth to the Law of Moses. Thus in Matthew 5:21 we see Jesus redefine Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17. “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”

How much of the story of Christ in Egypt is theological meditation and how much is history? It is certainly prudent to reject the medieval elaborations to the biblical narrative. As to the Gospel core, we can, along with Pope Benedict XVI, accept it as both history and reflection until proven otherwise.

***Seeking the hidden Treasure, the impious tyrant today sacrificed innocent children, and Rachel was left without comfort. Seeing the unjust slaughter and premature death of those whom she bewailed, her heart was broken. But now she is consoled, seeing them in the bosom of Abraham.***

-From the Vespers of December 29