

ST. JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

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

Contact office: 570.343.6092 † 570.468.4854
stjosephscranton@gmail.com ♣ www.melkitescranton.org

PRAYER INTENTIONS

P. H. S.: Rev. Dn. Jos. Daratony. Mich. Abda. Marie Barron. Nikki Boudreaux. George Bales Sr. Lucille Bales. Jayne Buckley. Chris Carey. Maryann Nappi Donahue. Carol Downer. Dav. Fairclough, Sr. Rob. Fairclough, Sr. Sara Gomez. Niko Mayashairo. Mary McNeilly. Jos. Ed. Bartnicki. Sue Solsman. Sus. 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 & James Abda. ✱Marie Abda. ✱Nancy Abda. ✱Janice Assaf. ✱Thalia Assaf ✱Paul Bauman. ✱A.J. Bolus. ✱Veronica Bolus. ✱Jos. Bolus. ✱Gary Bolus. ✱Nich. Cianci. ✱Patricia Cimakosky. ✱Ann & John Coury. ✱Mary Sue Betress. ✱Cecilia Davidson ✱Margt. Dillenburg ✱Eric Jolly. ✱Jos. King ✱Blakely Lاندell. ✱Elaine Manuele. ✱Frank Milewski, Sr. ✱Frank Milewski, Jr. ✱Mary L. Mooty. ✱Karen Murray. ✱Marie Patchoski. ✱Anth. Simon. ✱Bill Simon. ✱Char. Simon. ✱Ruth Sirgany. ✱Mary A. Walsh. ✱Gen. Zaydon

CLERGY:

Rev. Christopher Manuele, Presbyter

DIVINE SERVICES:

Tuesday :

Compline 0:00 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.

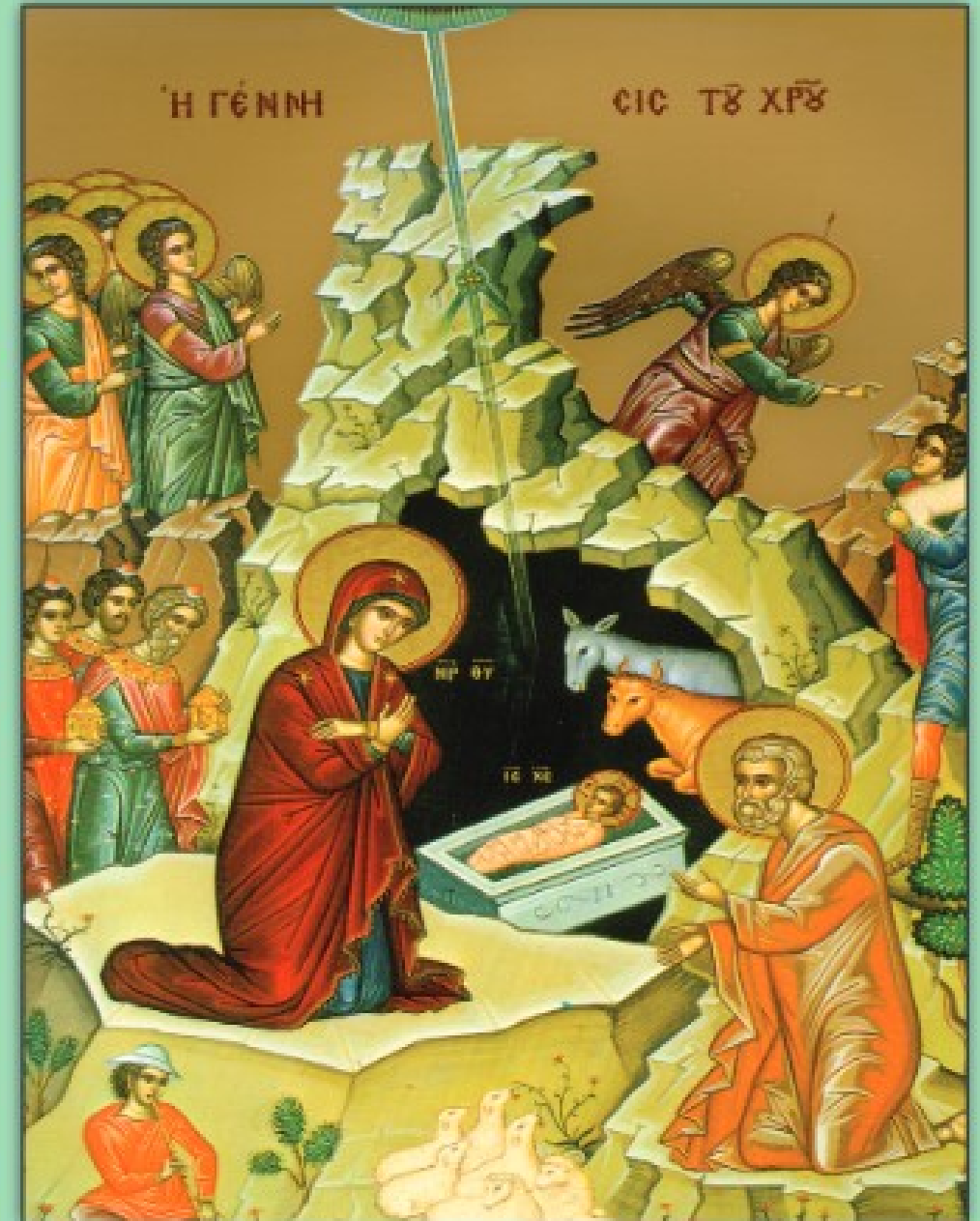
HOLY MYSTERY OF CROWNING:

Call rectory at earliest convenience.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR:

Report Sexual Abuse: 1.800.479.5910

SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD SUNDAY OF KING DAVID, JOSEPH AND JAMES



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord

DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

31 DECEMBER 2023 ♦ TONE 06 EOTHINON 09 † THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY

GREAT DOXOLOGY:

ANTIPHONS:

FIRST:

SECOND:

THIRD/BEATTITUDES:

ENTRANCE HYMN:

APOLYTIKIA:

Resurrection (Tone 6)

Nativity

St. Joseph the Betrothed

KONDAKION: *Nativity*

TRISAGION: *All of you who have been baptized*

PROKIMENON: *Ps. 117: 18, 14 (Tone 6)*

EPISTLE:

My son Timothy be watchful in all things, bear with tribulation patiently, work as a preacher of the Good News, fulfill your ministry. As for me, I am already being poured out in sacrifice, and the time of my deliverance is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have completed the course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the just Judge, will give to me on that day: yet not to me only, but also to those who love his coming.

ALLELUIA: *PSALM 43:2; 33:18 (Tone 5)*

May God have mercy on us and bless us.
May he let his face shine upon us and have mercy on us.

GOSPEL:

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, “Behold, I send my messenger before you, who shall prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the desert, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, make straight his paths,’” there came John in the desert, baptizing and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea went out to him, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and all were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “One mightier than I is coming after me, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

HIRMOS: *Nativity*

KINONIKON: *Nativity*

POST- COMMUNION HYMN: *Nativity*

Liturgy Book p. 17

Liturgy Book p. 29

Liturgy Book p. 32

Liturgy Book p. 125

Liturgy Book p. 151

Liturgy Book p. 44

Liturgy Book p. 152

Liturgy Book p. 47

Liturgy Book p. 153

Liturgy Book p. 51

Liturgy Book p. 59

Timothy 4:5-8

Liturgy Book p. 59

St. Mark 1:1-8

Liturgy Book p. 154

Liturgy Book p. 155

Liturgy Book p. 152 / p. 90

describes it, is also a cutting, but of the heart. It is the removal of something, often painful, so that we can be fitting members of Christ by “the sharp surgery of faith and by ascetic labors.”

The sharp knife of faith removes from our hearts its reliance on whatever we trust for our security other than the true God. In the Roman Empire Jews trusted in the Law of Moses and pagans trusted in the gods and goddesses of the state. In our day it may be our family, our job, our culture or our political and economic systems that we feel will take care of us. People continually find that any of these can fail them drastically if they put the confidence in them that is due to God alone.

The surgery of ascetic labors is the way we deal with our pride, our greed, our lust and the like: often particularly painful as it is a surgery we face daily. St. Paul described this dynamic as “... the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11). Elsewhere he catalogued these sins as “...your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5). Lest we feel too confident in our “sinlessness,” he continues the list with “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language” and lying (Col 3:8-9). Of these we continually need to be circumcised.

What Is “The Flesh”?

When speaking of “the sins of the flesh” St Paul uses a Greek word, *sarx*. This is not the Greek word for body – *soma* – which shows that the Apostle is not equating the body with sin. As the fourth-century Egyptian ascetic Poemen said, “*We were taught, not to kill the body, but to kill the passions.*” *Sarx* has been described as “the complex of sin, death and futility into which humanity has imprisoned itself...” (John S. Custer, *The Apostolic Writings*, p. 78). The term “flesh,” then, includes anything including mental attitudes and even religious practices which are opposed to the kingdom of God.

Circumcising the flesh, in fact, involves dealing more with our motivations, our imaginations and the whole range of our conscious and subconscious thoughts. It is a refocusing of all our attitudes as well as our actions on God and the godly way of life. Asceticism, then, is the means by which we restore the natural hierarchy of body and spirit. The body is meant to serve the spirit; not the other way around, as is the case in the fallen world. Human nature in its fallen, sinful condition finds the spirit enslaved to the flesh, and to the need to gratify the appetites of the flesh. Insofar as the spirit remains in this state of bondage, it is rendered incapable of communing with God.

Spiritual circumcision, then, is an indispensable part of our progress toward union with God. It is an aspect of what we are urged to do continually in our liturgical services: “Let us commend ourselves, one another and our whole life to Christ God.”

Hymns of the Feast

The most merciful God did not disdain circumcision in the flesh. He offered Himself instead as a symbol and example of salvation to all. He made the Law, and yet submitted Himself to its commands and to what the prophets had foretold of Him. O our God who hold all things in Your hands, and yet were wrapped in swaddling clothes: O Lord, glory to You!
(Vespers sticheron)

Theophany House Blessings

If you would like your home blessed during this holy season please sign up in the back of the church, call the rectory 570.343.6092 or speak to Fr. Christopher

53RD MELKITE CONVENTION

“Becoming Disciples, Making Disciples”

July 4-7, 2024

Boston Marriott Quincy Hotel
in Quincy, MA

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

OUR CELEBRATION OF CHRIST’S NATIVITY draws to a close today with the Feast of His Circumcision. Many primitive cultures have traditions of marking the body in some way to distinguish the recipient as a member of the tribe, a warrior, or a member of the ruling class. In the Middle East circumcision has been practiced as a sign of belonging at least since the time of Abraham. To this day it is a defining rite among both Jews and Muslims.

In the book of Genesis we read God’s requirement: *“This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you that you must keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. Circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the mark of the covenant between you and me. Throughout the ages, every male among you, when he is eight days old, shall be circumcised, including house-born slaves and those acquired with money from any foreigner who is not of your blood. Yes, both the house-born slaves and those acquired with money must be circumcised. Thus my covenant shall be in your flesh as an everlasting pact. If a male is uncircumcised, that is, if the flesh of his foreskin has not been cut away, such a one shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant...”* (Gen 17:10-14).

In accordance with this law the Lord Jesus was circumcised eight days after His birth. It was also the time that He was formally given the name Jesus. At first glance we see that in this Jesus’ family was simply doing what was customary among Jews. They were making the infant a part of God’s People, the people of the Covenant. By His incarnation the Word of God became a human being, one of us by nature. By His circumcision He became a member of a specific people, a Jew. He would observe the Sabbath, study Torah and observe the festival pilgrimages to Jerusalem (see Lk 2:41-52). He would observe the traditions of Israel because it was through Israel that the world would be saved. As we sing at vespers on this feast: *“The most merciful God did not disdain circumcision in the flesh. He offered Himself instead as a symbol and example of salvation to all. He made the Law, and yet submitted Himself to its commands and to what the prophets had foretold of Him. O our God, who hold all things in Your hands, and yet were wrapped in swaddling clothes: O Lord, glory to You!”*

The Church, reflecting on His circumcision, looked at it from other vantages as well. St. Cyril of Alexandria, for example, in his third homily on the Gospel of St. Luke, noted: “It seems to me that circumcision achieved three distinct ends. In the first place, it separated the descendants of Abraham by a sort of sign and seal and distinguished them from all other nations.

“Second, it prefigured in itself the grace and efficacy of divine baptism. Formerly a male who was circumcised was included among the people of God by virtue of that seal; nowadays a person who is baptized and has formed in himself Christ the seal becomes a member of God’s adopted family.

“Third, circumcision is the symbol of the faithful when they are established in grace, as they cut away and mortify the tumultuous rising of carnal pleasures and passions by the sharp surgery of faith and by ascetic labors. They do this, not by cutting the body but by purifying the heart. They do this by being circumcised in the spirit and not in the letter.”

Our Spiritual Circumcision

A circumcision is a cutting of the flesh; circumcision according to the letter, as St Cyril

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENTS IN DECEMBER

Saturday Evening, December 30

NO DIVINE SERVICES

Sunday Morning, December 31

Baptism of Sarah Virginia Miller:

9:15 a.m.

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

EVENTS IN JANUARY

Monday Morning, January 01

CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD JESUS

Festal Orthros: 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday Morning, January 05

Royal Hours: 10:00 a.m.

Friday Evening, January 05

Vespers Divine Liturgy: 5:30 p.m.

- Blessing of the Waters

Saturday Morning, January 06

THEOPHANY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Festal Orthros: 10:00 a.m.

Blessing of the Waters

Saturday Evening, January 06

Confessions: 3:00 p.m.

Great Vespers: 3:15 p.m.

Divine Liturgy: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Evening, January 07

Resurrectional Orthros: 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Saturday Evening, January 13

Confessions: 3:00 p.m.

Great Vespers: 3:15 p.m.

Divine Liturgy: 4:00 p.m.

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.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

- 31 December: ✠Deceased members of Barron & Shehadi Families from Marie Barron
- 01 January: ✠Veronica Bolus from Kimberly Boackle
- 06 January: ✠Veronica Bolus from Kimbe Boackle
- 07 January: ✠Veronica Bolus from Kimberly Boackle
- 13 January: ✠Deceased members of Barron & Shehadi Families
- 14 January: ✠Veronica Bolus from Kimberly Boackle
- 21 January: Michael & Carolyn deTar ✠ from M/M Zachary Bateman Family
- 28 January: Russell & Kathleen Bateman ✠ from M/M Zachary Bateman Family
- 02 February: Nick & Patrica Peluso from M/M Daniel Schiller Family
- 03 February:
- 04 February: Paul & Kathleen Schiller from M/M Daniel Schiller Family

THE CITY OF DAVID

The City of David IN 1868 REV PHILIPS BROOKS, rector of an Episcopal church in Philadelphia, wrote “O Little Town of Bethlehem” for his Sunday School. He had visited the Holy Land a few years earlier and he wanted to share something of that trip with his young parishioners. Could he have imagined that people would still be singing that simple tune today?

Rev Brooks was far from the first person to be intrigued by Bethlehem, an insignificant place by worldly standards but one of lasting religious importance to both Jews and Christians. First settled by the Canaanites over 1400 years before Christ, the town was called the “house of Lahama,” a local fertility god. When the Israelites conquered the town during the first millennium BC they reinterpreted the name to mean “house of bread” (*beyt lehem*). Arab Palestinians, the local population today, call it the “house of meat” (*beyt laham*).

Bethlehem in the Old Testament

The first mention of Bethlehem in the Bible is in the Book of Genesis: “*So Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrath that is, Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day*” (Gen 35:19, 20). Ephrath is a Hebrew word for “fertility,” recalling the old Canaanite meaning of the name. The two names are often placed side by side in the Old Testament.

Jews consider Rachel’s grave as one of their holiest sites. It is also revered by Christians and Muslims. The pillar marking the burial place of Rachel was replaced during the Ottoman era by a tomb-like shrine which remains as a place of pilgrimage today.

Rachel’s connection with Bethlehem is noted in St Matthew’s Gospel. Quoting Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew describes the mourning for the Holy Innocents as “*Rachel weeping for her children*” (Mt 2:18).

Home of Jesse, Father of David

The town is next described as the home of Jesse, the father of David, Israel’s future king. The Prophet Samuel is sent there by God to identify the next king of Israel: “*Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons*” (1 Sm 16:1). Jesse parades his sons before Samuel but the prophet does not choose any of them. Finally, “*Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Are all your young men here?’ Then he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.’ And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.’ So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward*” (1 Sm 16:11-13).

David becomes an attendant to the current king, Saul. He is present when the Philistine warrior, Goliath, challenges the Israelites to send out a champion to face him. David volunteers and slays him with his slingshot.

Saul names David commander of his troops but David’s growing popularity eventually turns Saul against him. It is only after Saul is killed by the Philistines that the leading men chose David as their king.

The highpoint of David’s victorious reign is the capture of what would be his capital, Jerusalem, which would be then known as the city of David. The actual site of David’s city, to the southeast of the present Old City of Jerusalem, has been excavated since the nineteenth century.

Bethlehem, City of David?

While Jerusalem is repeatedly called the City of David in the Old Testament, St Luke’s Gospel is the only place in the Scriptures where Bethlehem is given that distinction. We are told that “*Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David...*” (Lk 2:4). Why does Luke identify Bethlehem in this way?

Luke gives Bethlehem, the city of David’s birth, the royal title proper to Jerusalem to accentuate the paradox that, despite Jesus’ humble origins, His is a royal birth. St Matthew does the same thing when he quotes the following prophecy of Micah: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” (Mi 5:2).

When St Luke uses the title “City of David” for Bethlehem he makes an unspoken comparison between Christ and His ancestor in the flesh. David was born a man of the soil who was later chosen to be king. Jesus was an eternal King who took upon Himself the humble circumstances of being born in a cave and laid in a manger. David is a shepherd who became a king. Jesus is a King, worshipped by the shepherds, David’s successors. While David transcended his lowly birth, Jesus transformed His, making it the object of our songs.

The Basilica of the Nativity

One of the most important churches which the empress St Helena commissioned during her trip to the Holy Land in the early fourth century is the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The site on which it was built had been revered for years by people in the area, as Origen attests: “If anyone wants further proof to convince him that Jesus was born in Bethlehem besides the prophecy of Micah and the story recorded in the Gospels by Jesus’ disciples, he may observe that, in agreement with the story in the Gospel about His birth, the cave in Bethlehem where He was born is pointed out, with the manger in the cave where He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. What is shown there is famous in these parts, even among people alien to the faith, that indeed Jesus, who is worshipped and revered by the Christians, was born in this cave” (*Contra Celsum*, book I, chapter LI).

The church soon became one of the chief shrines in the Holy Land and a favorite destination of pilgrims. Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Life of Constantine* written in 335, notes that “the most pious Empress honored the Theotokos’ pregnancy with wonderful monuments, embellishing the sacred cave with all possible splendor. And soon thereafter the emperor himself honored it with imperial offerings, adding to his mother’s works of art with costly presents of silver and gold and embroidered curtains” (*Life*, 3.43).

The church built by St Helena – a rotunda overlooking the cave with an attached nave and atrium – was destroyed in the sixth century during a Samaritan rebellion against Roman rule. It was rebuilt by Emperor Justinian in 565 in the form which remains to this day: a Greek basilica-style church built over the underground Grotto of the Nativity, the shrine marking the traditional place of Christ’s birth. A silver star under the altar, supposedly marking the “exact spot” where Christ was born, was added by the French in the eighteenth century.

The basilica itself is administered by the Greek Orthodox patriarchate, which shares control of the grotto with the Armenian and Roman Catholics Churches. There are several chapels on Manger Square, surrounding the basilica, the largest being the Latin Church of St Catherine of Alexandria. There are also Armenian, Greek, and Latin monasteries attached to the basilica.