

ST. JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

MELKITE GREEK- CATHOLIC CHURCH
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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 Landell. ✱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 BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD SUNDAY OF THE ANCESTORS



Icon of the Holy Ancestors

DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

24 DECEMBER 2023 ♦ TONE 05 EOTHINON 08 † TIRTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY

GREAT DOXOLOGY:

ANTIPHONS:

FIRST:

SECOND:

THIRD/BEATTITUDES:

ENTRANCE HYMN:

APOLYTIKIA:

Resurrection (Tone 5)

Preparation

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 has 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.

St. Joseph the Betrothed

KONDAKION: Preparation for Nativity

TRISAGION:

PROKIMENON: Ps. 117: 18, 14

(Tone 5)

EPISTLE: *Genealogy*

Brethren, by faith, Abraham lived in the Land of the Promise as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the co-heirs of the same promise, for he was looking for the city with fixed foundations, of which city the architect and builder is God. And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barac, Samson, Jephthe, David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained the fulfillment of promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle, routed foreign armies. Women had their dead restored to them though resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to yield for their release in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others again suffered mockery and blows, even chains and jailings. They were stoned, cut to pieces, put to the question, killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, distressed, afflicted (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts, mountains, caves and holes in the ground. And none of these, despite the positive witnessing of faith, received what was promised, for God has something better in store for us, so that they were not to reach their final perfection without us.

ALLELUIA: *PSALM 43:2; 33:18*

(Tone 5)

O God, our ears have heard, our fathers have declared to us the deeds You did in their days, in the days of old.

The just cried out, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them from all their trials.

GOSPEL:

The book of the origin of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, Jacob begot Judah and his brethren. Judah begot Perez and Zarah whose mother was Tamar. Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram. And Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salma. Salma begot Boaz of Rahab. Boaz begot Obed of Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, Jesse begot David the King. And David the King begot Solomon of the former wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, Abijah begot Asa. And Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, Joram begot Azariah. And Azariah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, Ahaz begot Ezechiah. And Ezechiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, Amon begot Josiah. And Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brethren at the time of deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. And Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, Eliakim begot Azor. And Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, Achim begot Eliud. And Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, and of her was born Jesus, Who is called Christ. So, all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations. And from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to Christ, fourteen generations. Now the origin of Christ was like this. When Mary His mother had been betrothed to Joseph, she was

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!

PARAMONY (EVE) OF THE HOLY NATIVITY

CHRISTMAS TREES ARE EVERYWHERE: 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 shall enjoy the tree

found, before they came together, to be with child by the Holy Spirit. But Joseph her husband, being a just man and not wishing to expose her to reproach, was thinking of putting her away privately. But while he was considering these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Do not be afraid, Joseph, son of David, to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.” Now all this came to pass that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, “*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son; and they shall call his name Emmanuel;*” which is interpreted, “God with us.” So, Joseph, arising from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took Mary to be his wife. And he did not know her till she brought forth her firstborn son. And he called His name Jesus.

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENTS IN DECEMBER

December 01 - December 24

Philip Fast for the Nativity
Friday Evening, December 22

**[DAY OF STRICT ABSTINENCE,
& FASTING UNTIL NOON]**

Royal Hours: 5:30 p.m.

Confessions following service.

Saturday Evening, December 23

Confessions 3:00 p.m.

Great Vespers: 3:15 p.m.

Divine Liturgy: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Morning, December 24

Resurrectional Orthros: 9:00 a.m.

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Church Christmas Decorating
Sunday Evening, December 24

Confessions: 5:00 p.m.

Vigil Liturgy of St. Basil the Great:

Great Vespers: 5:30 p.m.

Divine Liturgy: 6:00 p.m.

Monday Morning, December 25

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Festival Orthros: 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.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

23 December: Children of St. Joseph Church*

24 December: Patrick Cherkoski*
from Sean T. Pendrak

24 December: *Charlie Simon & John Coury

Pastor Away !

**Fr. Christopher will be visiting his parents
in Chicago**

**Monday evening, December 25
to Saturday morning December 30, 2023.**

Sacramental Emergencies:

Saint Mary's Byzantine: 570.342.8429

St. Ann Maronite: 570.344.3129

SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

FROM DECEMBER 20 TO 24 we observe a five-day “holy week” during which Christ’s birth seems ever closer. This fore-feast of the Nativity culminates on December 24, the Paramony of the feast. During these days we focus on how the birth of the long-expected Messiah is at hand. As we sing during those days, “Today the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth to the eternal Word of God in an ineffable manner.”

The hope that One would come to deliver God’s people from their enemies is found throughout the Old Testament. In Numbers 24 we read a prophecy of Balaam, “*I see a star that rises out of Jacob, a stem that springs from Israel’s root; one who shall lay low the chiefs of Moab, shall bring devastation on all the posterity of Seth*” (v.17). The “star rising out of Jacob” is a way of saying “a descendant of Jacob.” As we read in Matthew’s genealogy, Jesus was a descendant of Jacob.

This expected one was clearly a national leader who would deliver the Israelites from their enemies. Jewish people expected this kind of savior throughout their history. Some Jews, however, looked for more. They read God’s promise to David to mean that the kingdom of his son Solomon would endure forever: “*When your days are ended, and you are laid to rest beside your fathers, I will grant you for successor a son of your own body, established firmly on his throne. He it is who shall build a house to do my name honor. I will prolong forever his royal dynasty*” (2 Sam 7:12-13). As we read in Matthew’s genealogy, Jesus was a descendant of David.

The prophets deepened the Jews’ understanding of just who the Messiah would be. We read in Isaiah 40, “*Tell the cities of Juda, See, your God comes! See, the Lord God is coming, revealed in power, with his own strong arm for warrant; and see, they come with him, they walk before him, the reward of his labor, the achievement of his task, his own flock! Like a shepherd he tends them, gathers up the lambs and carries them in his bosom*” (vv. 10, 11). The promised One is the Lord Himself, our Good Shepherd.

The Tree of Life

Every day during the fore-feast of the Nativity we sing the following troparion: *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: “*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 shall enjoy the tree of life in paradise, with Adam and all the righteous*” (St Hippolytus of Rome, Commentary on Proverbs).

In the Genesis story of creation 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 though 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. 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 our troparion Christ is called the Fruit planted in the spiritual paradise of the Virgin’s

womb. As Mary’s cousin Elizabeth proclaimed – with countless generations after her – “*Blessed is the Fruit of your womb!*” (Lk 1:42)

The Paramony of the Nativity

Usually translated as vigil or eve, paramony actually refers to the uninterrupted nature of the Church’s prayer on this day. During the day the lengthier Great Hours or Royal Hours are chanted.

The *Royal Hours* replace the ordinary First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours, served every day in Byzantine practice. They contain some different psalms as well as readings from both the Old and New Testaments. While for most of the year the Hours are “cell services” – without choral responses or accompanying ritual, meant to be served by monastics in their cells (or by anyone at work or at home), the Royal Hours are served solemnly in church with hymns, Scripture readings and ceremony, concluding with the Typika. The name “Royal Hours” comes from the practice of the Great Church in Constantinople. The emperor and his court would attend the Hours on these days, emphasizing their importance in the life of the Church.

The Royal Hours are served on the Paramony of Christmas, the Paramony of the Theophany and on Great and Holy Friday, which we might call the “Paramony of Pascha.” In addition, some Greek Churches serve the Royal Hours on the Eve of Pentecost as well, but without fasting.

At the Christmas Royal Hours the following prophecies are read. Each one has found fulfillment in the Nativity of Christ:

Micah 5:2-4 “But you, Bethlehem Ephratha, 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.”

Baruch 3:36-4:4 “Wisdom has appeared on earth, is at home with mortals... what pleases God has been revealed to us!” *Isaiah* 7:10-16 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; the government will be upon His shoulder and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

A Day of Fasting

The Paramony is a strict fast day. Many people don’t eat anything until the evening. This is why the Divine Liturgy is not served until the end of the fasting day, when it is joined to a more elaborate than usual Great Vespers. As on other fast days, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is prescribed for Christmas Eve.

In the fullest observance a special service of Great Compline with a Litia for the feast ends the day. Sometimes this leads directly into the Orthros and Divine Liturgy of December 25. The same order is also prescribed for the Eve of the Theophany.

In some countries of Eastern Europe the Paramony culminates with a Holy Supper of twelve vegan courses representing the apostles. In the Balkans wheat pies and kutia (boiled wheat) are popular on this day.

Come, O Bethlehem, and prepare a birth-place with the most precious manger and the God-bearing swaddling-bands, in which our Life was wrapped. Come, O Joseph, and register yourself with Mary! Christ our God breaks asunder the bonds of death, enfolding men in incorruption.

Prepare yourself, O Bethlehem! Adorn yourself well, O manger! The Truth has come! Receive Him, O cave! The shadow has passed away, and God has appeared to men through the Virgin, assuming our form and deifying our flesh. Wherefore, Adam is restored, and cries out with Eve: Blessing has appeared on earth to save our race!