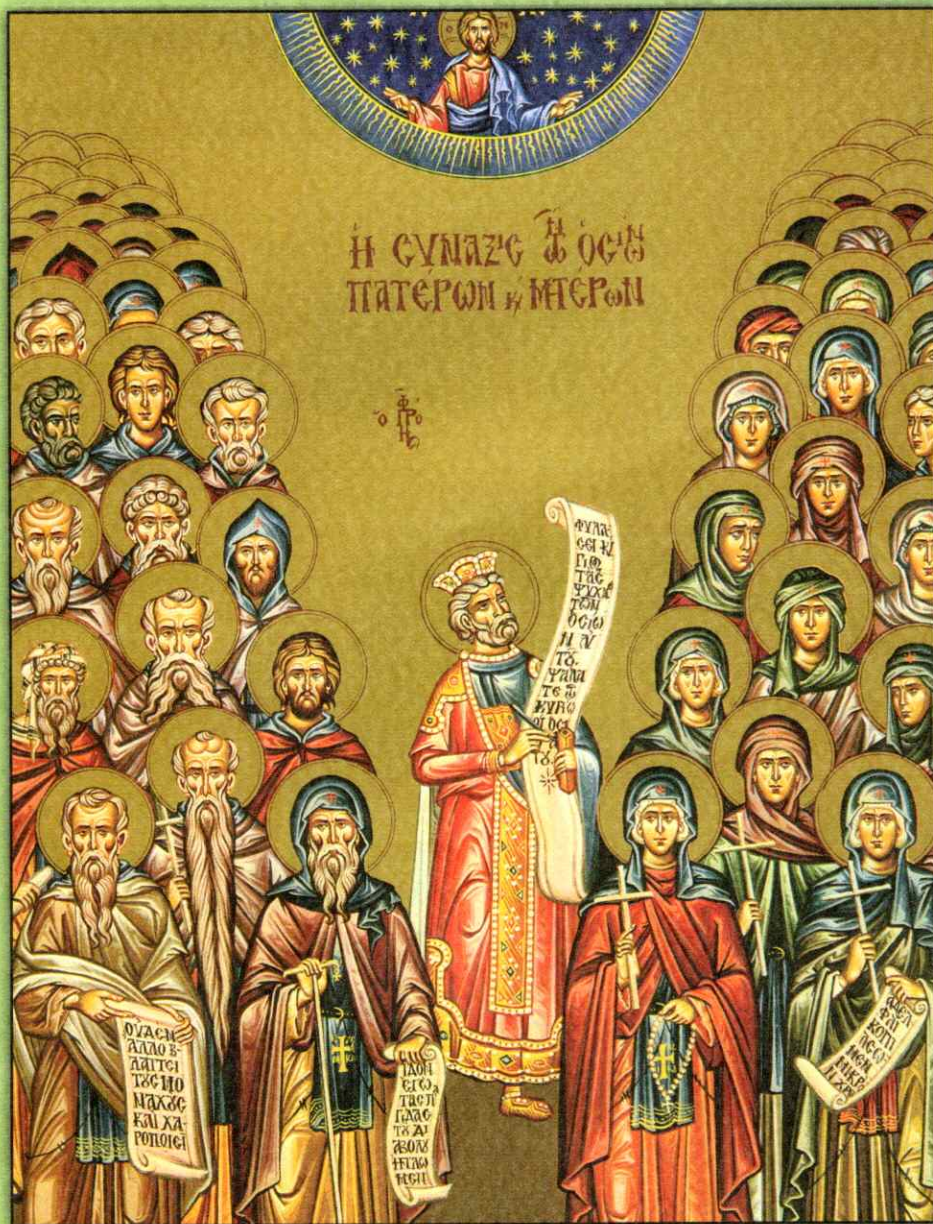


SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
SUNDAY OF THE ANCESTORS



Icon of the Holy Ancestors

DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

21 DECEMBER 2025 ♦ TONE 03 EOTHINON 2† SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY ♦ THE JUST JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

GREAT DOXOLOGY:

Liturgy Book p. 17

ANTIPHONS: *Nativity*

FIRST:

Liturgy Book p. 29

SECOND:

Liturgy Book p. 32

BEATTITUDES

Liturgy Book p. 125

ENTRANCE HYMN:

Liturgy Book p. 38

APOLYTIKIA:

Resurrection (Tone 3)

Liturgy Book p. 41

Nativity

(Tone 2)

Faith can accomplish great things. Through it, the Three Holy Children rejoice in the flames as if they had been in refreshing water, and Daniel in the midst of lions is like a shepherd among his sheep. Through their intercession, O Christ God, save our souls.

Patron: St. Joseph

Liturgy Book p. 47

Glory to the Father....

KONDAKION: *Nativity*

Liturgy Book p. 150

TRISAGION:

Liturgy Book p. 50

PROKIMENON: *Blessed are you O Lord God of our Fathers*

(Liturgy Book p. 59

EPISTLE: *Genealogy*

Hebrews 1:9-10; 32-40

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 98:6; 33:18*

(Tone 7)

Liturgy Book p. 59

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

days, in the days of old. Stichon: The just cried out, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them from all their trials.

GOSPEL:

St. Matthew 1:1-25

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 Ezechias. And Ezechias 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

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 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.

HIRMOS:

KINONKON:

COMMUNION HYMN:

Book p. 77

Liturgy Book p. 83

Liturgy Book p. 87

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.

EVENTS IN DECEMBER

Wednesday Evening, December 24

Vesperal Vigil Divine Liturgy:

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday Morning, December 25

NATIVITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

January 1, 2025

CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD

ST BASIL THE GREAT

Divine liturgy 10:00 a.m.

2025 WEEKLY COLLECTION

December 22

Weekly Offering: \$ 977.00

Candles: \$ 4.00

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

**28 December: ✠Tony
from Will Abda and sons**

The Story of the Origin of Jesus Christ, Son of David, and the Rest of the Names

Matthew's genealogy is extraordinarily comprehensive in his theology of the roots of Jesus' story in the Old Testament. But that is only one part of the story of Jesus Christ. The story has a sequence as well; and the continuing sequence is what makes the genealogy "good news" for Matthew's audience and for us.

Human being have been empowered to preserve, proclaim, and convey the salvation brought by Jesus Christ throughout history. The God who wrote the beginnings with crooked lines also writes the sequence with crooked lines, and some of those lines are our own lives and witness.

A God who did not hesitate to use the scheming as well as the noble, the impure as well as the pure, men to whom the world hearkened and women upon whom the world frowned – this God continues to work through the same melange. If it

was a challenge to recognize in the last part of Matthew's genealogy that totally unknown people were part of the story of Jesus Christ, it may be a greater challenge to recognize that the unknown characters of today are an essential part of the sequence. The proclamation of that genealogy in the Advent liturgy is designed to give us hope about our destiny and our importance.

By stressing the all-powerful grace of God, the genealogy presents its greatest challenge to those who will accept only an idealized Jesus Christ whose story they would write only with straight lines and whose portrait they would paint only in pastel colors. If we look at the whole story and the total picture, the Gospels teach us that Jesus' ministry was not thus; the history of the church teaches us that the sequence as not thus. God's grace can work even with people like us.

MATTHEW 1:1-25: SON OF GOD, SON OF MAN

RESEARCHING FAMILY HISTORY has become a favorite pastime for many Americans seeking to discover their roots. One reason for this resurgent interest is that, for many, family history was ignored for so long. Many Americans see themselves as forward-looking rather than fixated on their past. The growing interest in genealogical research shows that at least some Americans want to know where they came from.

In more traditional societies one's family tree may be a source of pride or amusement, but it is always an object of interest. Little wonder, then, that the first Christians displayed an interest in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ. They had encountered Him healing the sick and touching their hearts. They knew Him as the One who forgave sins, raised the dead and rose Himself. They looked to His ancestry to discover more who He really was.

"Son of David, Son of Abraham"

St. Matthew's Gospel begins with a genealogy of Christ (Mt 1:1-16); it is the passage we read each year on the Sunday before Christmas. The first words of the passage – *biblos geneleos Iesous Christos* – translated literally as "the book of the genesis of Jesus Christ" – would remind the reader of the entire sweep of Jewish history by harkening back to Genesis, the first Book of the Torah. They would realize that Christ was both the beginning and the climax of God's dealing with the human race, starting in the Garden.

Matthew's genealogy portrays Christ as descended from David through the house of Joseph, His adoptive father. Since the time of King David (tenth century BC) Jewish rulers had based their authority on their connection to David. The awaited Messiah was portrayed in Jewish tradition as the "son of David" for a similar reason: to show that he, like David, was anointed by God to be Israel's deliverer.

In this passage Jesus' ancestry is traced back another millennium to the patriarch Abraham with whom God had made His first covenant with the ancestors of the Jewish people. For the first Christians, portraying Jesus as the son of Abraham meant that He was the personification of the nation, heir to the promises made by God to Abraham and to his seed, "*who is Christ*" (Gal 3:16).

Commentators have pointed out other aspects of this passage which reflect the early Church's faith in Christ. In this listing of fathers and sons we find two women – and foreign women at that. Jesus is not only son of Abraham and David. He is son of all mankind: Jew and Gentile, male and female, truly one of us in the flesh.

Finally, we note that besides being an exercise in genealogy, this passage is also built on numerology: the significance of numbers in the narrative it recounts. The ancestry of Christ is divided into three groups of fourteen, the numerological equivalent of "David." Several less than worthy individuals are removed from the Old Testament lists to come up with this number, leaving us with a catalog of the righteous ancestors of Christ. This grouping also alludes to the 28-day lunar cycle. Like the star of Bethlehem, the moon is introduced to show the cosmic significance of Jesus' birth.

These interpretations suggest that Matthew's genealogy is an example of what Pope Benedict XVI, in his three-volume work *Jesus of Nazareth*, called "interpreted history": based on events that actually happened, but as they were "interpreted and understood in the context of the Word of God."

"Son of Adam"

St Luke's Gospel also contains a genealogy: one with a different placement and a different emphasis. While Matthew connects Jesus' lineage with the story of His birth, Luke places it in the context of His hearer's idea of Him. "*Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed), the son of Joseph, the son of...*" (Lk 3:23). And while Matthew emphasizes the connections between Jesus, David and Abraham, Luke traces Jesus' lineage back to "*Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God*" (Lk 3:38). Luke, of Gentile origin, traces Christ back to the beginnings of the human race, stressing His connection with all mankind. Jesus is not only a son of Israel but of the entire human race.

Many commentators have noted other discrepancies between these genealogies which would be contradictory if these passages were not "interpreted history." Thus St. Ambrose sees Matthew showing Christ's royal family heritage and Luke stressing his priestly connection. "We should not consider one account truer than the other," he writes, "but that the one agrees with the others in equal faith and truth. According to the flesh, Jesus was truly of a royal and priestly family, King from kings, Priest from priests" (*Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to Luke*, 87-88).

Fr John Custer summarizes another theological message in this passage. "Adam has no other 'father' but God and no 'mother' but the virgin earth from which he was taken. Adam became a 'living being when God breathed into him (Gen 2:7). All this resembles the Holy Spirit overshadowing the Virgin Mary in the conception of Jesus, whose only true father is God" (*The Holy Gospel, a Byzantine Perspective*, p. 408).

"In the Beginning Was the Word"

While not offering a genealogy in the same sense, St John's Gospel begins with another Genesis-like statement on the Lord's origins. Using the same opening words as the Book of Genesis (definitely not an oversight), John tells us that "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without him nothing was made that was made*" (Jn 1:1). The Son of God became incarnate in time (Jn 1:14 - "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*") but even before that, before time, He was with the Father as His eternal Son.

Thus the Gospels present us with a panoramic vision of the eternal Word become one of us: Son of Abraham and David, son of Seth and Adam, King and Priest, the only-begotten Son of the Father, of whose fullness we have all received.

Canon of the Fore-feast, Ode 3

THE SON WAS BORN INEFFABLY of the Father before all ages. And in these last days, He has willed to be incarnate of the Virgin Mary without seed. Let us lift up our voices to the Lord and say: "You have lifted us up from our fallen state. Holy are You, O Christ our God!"

~The Son was born ineffably of the Father before all ages. We sing to Him! And in these last days, He has willed to be incarnate of the Virgin Mary for He willed to lift up the human race which fell through the deadly advice of the serpent.

~He who is enthroned in the highest Heaven with the Father and the Holy Spirit saw the humiliation of the human race. The Son of the Father, without beginning, enters into time. Behold, He allows Himself to be born in the flesh as man!

~The All-Holy One who surpasses the angels and all creation in holiness now gives birth in the flesh to the Messenger of the Father, the Angel of His Great Counsel, in order to lift up those who ceaselessly sing, "Holy are You, O Christ our God!"

CHRIST IS BORN ! GLORIFY HIM !

OUR NATURE HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED in Christ... our nature is being transformed in Christ... our nature will be transformed in Christ. At first glance this may seem like a grammar exercise about verbs. In fact it is a summary of theology: exploring the magnitude of the mystery which is Christ in us.

Christ's Coming Has Transformed Us

The focus of our Christmas celebration is most often on the Gospel narratives of Matthew and Luke. They speak of the trip to Bethlehem, the angels and shepherds, the magi and the star. But from the earliest days of the Church believers have seen the birth of Christ containing, as it were, the whole life and death of Christ as a seed. His acceptance of our human nature necessarily includes His acceptance of the cross and death, and His renewal of mankind by His resurrection. In the same way our decision to have children must include the decision to accept the Terrible Twos, the Traumatic Teens, and all that follows.

For many religious people, when something holy comes into contact with something profane the holy thing becomes defiled. This principle is found in Judaism and Islam and accounts for the ritual washings and similar practices in these religions. The message of the Gospel, however, is that when the Holy One, the Son of God, comes into contact with something profane it is the profane thing which is changed. It is sanctified by contact with the holy. God is not defiled by His fallen creation; His creation is transformed when He enters into it in Christ. As described by St Gregory of Nyssa, "The Word in taking flesh was mingled with humanity, and took our nature within Himself, so that the human should be deified by this mingling with God: the stuff of our nature was entirely sanctified by Christ, the first-fruits of creation" (*Against Apollonarius*, 2).

By taking on our humanity the Word of God assumes all that we are, except sin, so that we can become by grace what He is by nature, children of the Father. Our nature is transfigured in Him. It is divinized or deified. As St Gregory the Theologian boldly expressed it, "He took our flesh and our flesh became God, since it is united with God and forms a single entity with Him" (*Third Theological Oration*).

Our society, and contemporary culture in general, is committed to the value and freedom of the individual. We recognize that each person has worth in himself or herself and this is good. But a stress on individualism inevitably leads to the separation of peoples from one another. At worst, people are alienated from society, from God, from one another. At the least, we find it hard to see the communal dimension to the incarnation: that the entire human race is irrevocably changed because the Son of God has come into it.

Christ's Presence Transforms Us

"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). These final words of Christ to His disciples before His ascension affirm His continuing presence with us. His physical presence was limited in time; His spiritual presence will last as long as time itself will last.

The focus on Christ's spiritual presence is His Body, the Church. It is the mystery or sacrament of the risen Christ, which – like all sacraments – reveals His presence behind a veil. The Church is the world being transformed in Christ; at the same time it is Christ transforming the world. The faithful, insofar as they are living a life of repentance, seeking to model their

lives on Christ's, are the world being transformed.

The faithful, insofar as they celebrate Christ's presence in the Scriptures, in baptism, the Eucharist and the other mysteries – including the mystery of love for others – are Christ transforming the world. The saints are those who witness by their lives that we can be transformed and transform others in Him.

Christ's presence in the Scriptures was at first practically limited to its public reading in the assembly. People would listen carefully so as to memorize what they heard. Only the wealthy could afford hand-copied Scriptures for their personal use. In addition Books of Scripture, particularly the Gospels, would be richly adorned, carried in procession and offered for veneration, reminding believers that Christ was truly in them. Since the invention of printing the Scriptures have become increasingly available; as a result we may not be as quick to recognize the divine presence in a paperback Bible as in the Gospel on the holy table.

What enables us to experience the presence of Christ when we read the Scriptures – or, for that matter, when we assist at the Liturgy or other mysteries? St Isaac the Syrian offers the following advice: "Never approach the words of the mysteries that are in the Scriptures without praying and asking for God's help. Say, 'Lord, grant me to feel the power that is in them.' Reckon prayer to be the key that opens the true meaning of the Scriptures" (*Ascetical Treatises*, 73).

Even more hidden to us is the presence of Christ in others. This presence calls silently for us to acknowledge Him, a call that we often are too deaf to hear. Some, like Mother Teresa and others like her, can hear that call and they become the light and salt of the Gospel sayings. The presence of these saints with their acute hearing of Christ's voice is one of the signs that Christ is transforming the world even now.

Christ's Return Will Transform Us

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tm 4:8). St Paul expresses here his hope in the final transformation of "all who have loved His appearing."

Like St. Paul we await our ultimate transformation at Christ's return. As the Church celebrates Christ's appearing in the flesh (the Nativity) and His appearing in power at the Jordan (the Theophany), we are reminded that Christ's first coming would find its ultimate fulfillment only in His second coming.

"In His first coming He was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger.

In His second coming He is clothed with light as with a garment.

In His first coming He bore the cross, despising its shame;

He will come a second time in glory accompanied by the hosts of angels.

It is not enough for us, then, to be content with His first coming;

we must wait in hope of His second coming.

What we said at His first coming, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,'

we shall repeat at His last coming..."

From the Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem
The Christmas Carol: Our New Son