

St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance, as part of Orthodox Campus Fellowship
At the University of Mount Union, Dewald Chapel. Divine Liturgy, 9:00 am
Very Reverend Father Joseph Cervo, Archpriest (AOCANA-retired)
Rev. Protodeacon James Gresh, Mission Administrator (Bulgarian Diocese OCA)
December 22, 2013: 26th Sunday after Pentecost/Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ Sunday before the
Nativity of Christ/Sunday of the Genealogy



Icon of The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Tone 1 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Your most pure body,
You rose on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to You, O
Giver of Life:

“Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your Kingdom!!// Glory to Your dispensation, O Lover of
mankind!”

Tone 2 Troparion (Fathers)

Great are the accomplishments of faith, for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though in
the waters of rest;

and the Prophet Daniel appeared a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.// So by their prayers, O
Christ God, save our souls!

Tone 4 Troparion of the Forefeast

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all!

Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave!
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit; if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die
like Adam.//

Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

Tone 4 Troparion (St. Nikolai)

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence;
your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you. Hierarch Father Nikolai, entreat Christ our God that our
souls may be saved!

Tone 1 Kontakion (Fathers)

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha! The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief
Shepherd she carries in her womb.
The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him, and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin
nursing Him.

Tone 3 Kontakion (Forefeast)

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O
universe!

Glorify with the Angels and the shepherds the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little child!

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40 *(Sunday before Nativity)*

Tone 4 Prokeimenon *(Song of the Fathers)*

Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is
Your name forever! *(Song of the three Holy Youths)*
For You are just in all that You have done to us.

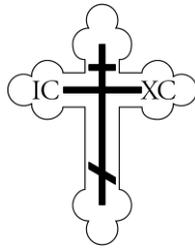
Tone 4 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*We have heard with our ears, O God, for our fathers have told us.
For You have saved us from them that oppose us, and have put to shame them that hate us.*

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25 *(Sunday before the Nativity)*

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!
Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!



The Winter Pascha, Chapter 16: The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

The following is an excerpt from the book, [The Winter Pascha](#), by Fr. Thomas Hopko

The gospel reading for the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday before Christmas is "the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," taken from the gospel according to St. Matthew. This genealogy lists the generations of people from Abraham to David, to the Babylonian captivity of the people of Israel, to the birth of Jesus. It is a selected genealogy, ending in the appearance of "Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ" (Mt 1:16). It differs from the genealogy presented in St. Luke's gospel which begins with Jesus "being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph," and goes back all the way not simply to Abraham but to Adam (Lk 3:23-38).

There are many purposes for presenting the genealogy of Jesus in the gospels, chief among which is the affirmation that Jesus, being in truth the Son of God, as all the gospels testify, has come "in the flesh" as a real human being. This affirmation was critically important in the time of the apostles and the first Christian generations because, unlike today, the temptation of the early period of Christianity was not to deny Jesus' divinity, but to deny His real and authentic humanity.

As a matter of historical fact, the first Christian heretics were those who said that Jesus was some sort of divine being (how this was explained had many variations and versions) who only appeared to be a true man, but was not really one since "flesh and blood" were taken to be intrinsically degrading if not downright evil. Thus the apostle Paul had to insist that in Jesus, who belongs to the Jews "according to the flesh" (Rom 9:5), the "whole fullness of deity dwells *bodily*" (Col 2:9), and that it is the same Jesus who died and was buried and raised in the flesh as a real man, who is Messiah and Lord.

The genealogies in the gospels of Saints Matthew and Luke are made to and from Joseph. This is not to give the impression that Jesus came from Joseph's seed. Both gospels are absolutely clear on this point. Jesus is born from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. The point is rather that Joseph is Jesus' father according to the law, and it is from the father that one's lawful descent is to be traced. Jesus' legal father is "Joseph, son of David," the legal husband of Mary (Mt 1:20).

One other important point is made in listing the human generations which led to the birth of Jesus. This is the fact that God is faithful to His promises even though His chosen people are often not faithful. Among the people from whom Jesus came are both sinners and heathens. In a word, Jesus comes not only from the righteous and holy, but from the wicked and sinful. And He comes not only from Jews, but from Gentiles. The names of the four women specifically mentioned in St. Matthew's list-- Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba)-- were noted, not to say notorious, Gentiles, including one of David's own wives, the mother of Solomon. The point to be seen here is one beautifully made in an early Christian hymn quoted in the Bible in the second letter to Timothy:

*If we have died with Him,
we shall also live with Him;
If we endure,
we shall also reign with Him;
If we deny Him,
He also will deny us;
If we are faithless,*

He remains faithful-- for He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim 2:11-13)

This is the wonderful witness of the genealogies of Jesus: If we are faithless, the Lord God remains faithful-- for he cannot deny Himself!

*Behold, the time of our salvation is at hand.
Prepare yourself, O cavern,
For the Virgin approaches to give birth to her Son.
Be glad and rejoice, O Bethlehem, land of Judah,
For from you our Lord shines forth as the dawn.
Give ear, you mountains and hills
And all lands surrounding Judea,
For Christ is coming to save the people
Whom He has created and whom He loves.¹*

¹Vespers of the Sunday before the Nativity

December Liturgical Schedule:

Saturday, December 21, 5 pm. Vespers, Confession following Vespers

Tuesday, December 24, 6 pm. Matins/Liturgy for the Nativity of Christ (Christmas).

Please Note: *There are no services Christmas morning.*

Sunday, December 29, 9 am. Liturgy; Sunday after Nativity of Christ (Christmas).

The Date of Christmas

While the birth year of Jesus is estimated among modern historians to have been between 7 and 2 BC, the exact month and day of his birth are unknown. His birth is mentioned in two of the four canonical gospels. By the early-to-mid 4th century, the Western Christian Church had placed Christmas on December 25, a date later adopted in the East. The date of Christmas may have initially been chosen to correspond with the day exactly nine months after early Christians believed Jesus to have been conceived, or with one or more ancient polytheistic festivals that occurred near southern solstice (i.e., the Roman winter solstice); a further solar connection has been suggested because of a biblical verse^[al] identifying Jesus as the "Sun of righteousness". Irenaeus (c. 130–202) viewed Christ's conception as March 25 in association with the Passion, with the nativity nine months after on December 25. Hippolytus of Rome (170–235) may also have identified December 25 for the birth of Jesus and March 25 for the conception. Sextus Julius Africanus (c. 160–c. 240) identified December 25, later to become the most widely accepted date of celebration, as the date Jesus' birth in 221. The precise origin of assigning December 25 to the birth of Jesus is unclear. Various dates were speculated: May 20, April 18 or 19, March 25, January 2, November 17 or 20. When celebration on a particular date began, January 6 prevailed at least in the East. but, except among Armenians (the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian Catholic Church), who continue to celebrate the birth on January 6, December 25 eventually won acceptance everywhere.

The New Testament Gospel of Luke may indirectly give the date as December for the birth of Jesus, with the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist cited by John Chrysostom (c. 386) as a date for the Annunciation. Tertullian (d. 220) did not mention Christmas as a major feast day in the Church of Roman Africa. In Chronographai, a reference work published in 221, Sextus Julius Africanus suggested that Jesus was conceived on the spring equinox. The equinox was March 25 on the Roman calendar, so this implied a birth in December.

The birth of Jesus was announced in Luke 2:11, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Moreover, the belief that God came into the world in the form of man to atone for the sins of humanity is considered to be the primary purpose in celebrating Christmas.

In the early 4th century, the church calendar in Rome contained Christmas on December 25 and other holidays placed on solar dates. According to Hijmans "It is cosmic symbolism ... which inspired the Church leadership in Rome to elect the southern solstice, December 25, as the birthday of Christ, and the northern solstice as that of John the Baptist, supplemented by the equinoxes as their respective dates of conception." Usener and others proposed that the Christians chose this day because it was the Roman feast celebrating the birthday of Sol Invictus. Modern scholar S. E. Hijmans, however, states that "While they were aware that pagans called this day the 'birthday' of Sol Invictus, this did not concern them and it did not play any role in their choice of date for Christmas."

Around the year 386 John Chrysostom delivered a sermon in Antioch in favour of adopting the 25 December celebration also in the East, since, he said, the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:26) had been announced during the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist (Luke 1:10-13), which he dated from the duties Zacharias performed on the Day of Atonement during the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar Ethanim or Tishri (Leviticus 16:29, 1 Kings 8:2) which falls from late September to early October. That shepherds watched the flocks by night in the fields in the winter time is supported by the phrase "frost by night" in Genesis 31:38-40. A special group known as the shepherds of Migdal Eder (Genesis 35:19-21, Micah 4:8) watched the flocks by night year round pastured for Temple Sacrifice near Bethlehem.

In the early 18th century, some scholars proposed alternative explanations. Isaac Newton argued that the date of Christmas, celebrating the birth of him whom Christians consider to be the "Sun of righteousness" prophesied in Malachi 4:2, was selected to correspond with the southern solstice, which the Romans called *bruma*, celebrated

on December 25. In 1743, German Protestant Paul Ernst Jablonski argued Christmas was placed on December 25 to correspond with the Roman solar holiday *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti* and was therefore a "paganization" that debased the true church. It has been argued that, on the contrary, the Emperor Aurelian, who in 274 instituted the holiday of the *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*, did so partly as an attempt to give a pagan significance to a date already important for Christians in Rome. In 1889, Louis Duchesne proposed that the date of Christmas was calculated as nine months after the Annunciation, the traditional date of the conception of Jesus.

Using the Julian calendar and the revised Julian calendar

The original date of the celebration in Eastern Christianity was January 6, in connection with Epiphany, and that is still the date of the celebration for the Armenian Apostolic Church and in Armenia, where it is a public holiday. As of 2013, there is a difference of 13 days between the modern Gregorian calendar and the older Julian calendar. Those who continue to use the Julian calendar or its equivalents thus celebrate December 25 and January 6, which on the Gregorian calendar translate as January 7 and January 19. For this reason, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Serbia, the Republic of Macedonia, and the Republic of Moldova celebrate Christmas on what in the Gregorian calendar is January 7. Eastern Orthodox Churches in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Antioch, Alexandria, Albania, Finland, and the Orthodox Church in America celebrate Christmas on December 25 in the revised Julian calendar, corresponding to December 25 also in the Gregorian calendar.

MISSION NEWS AND INFORMATION

Thank you to everyone who generously donated to our "Christmas Giving" project. Because of your kindness we were able to provide food and gifts to two families in the area. Linda Cervo and Cathy Krupko went shopping on Wednesday! If you are still interested in contributing your help is still appreciated! You may make a donation to St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission and designate it for "Christmas Giving".

We are still collecting items and/or cash contributions to purchase items to send to our military personnel serving away from home. We are planning on mailing the box in the next week or so. While the package will not be received in time for distribution at Christmas, the items will still be greatly appreciated.

God bless all for your kindness!

Our mission received the following invitation:



The parishioners of St. George invite you to a Banquet in honor of Fr. Yanni Verginis and his family on Sunday, December 29, 2013 at 1 pm.

Fr. Yanni has been transferred to another parish and this will be his last Sunday at St. George. Tickets for the meal (swiss steak, mashed potatoes, green beans, dessert) are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Please contact Barb Snyder at 330-844-2824 if you would like to purchase tickets.



We also received the following letter of thanks from Marlinton for adopting a family.



December 17, 2013

Dear Friends,

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of Lexington Elementary School to thank you for your generous contribution assisting some of our families during this holiday season. We are incredibly thankful and humbled by the care and love shown by members of your congregation. May the blessings you gave to others be returned to you this holiday season.

Sincerely,

David Rogers

Principal

Lexington Elementary School

St. Nikolai of Zica
Orthodox Mission of Alliance
P.O. Box 193
Maximo, Ohio 44650