

SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD



Icon of the Holy Ancestors

December 18, 2011

SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY - OF THE HOLY FATHERS

THE HOLY MARTYR SEBASTIAN AND HIS COMPANIONS

Tone 2

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 19 - DECEMBER 25

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23 - *TEN HOLY MARTYRS OF CRETE*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy ✙ Walter Bachynsky; Req: Bachynsky/McMurtry Families

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24 - *VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY*

10:00 AM - Royal Hours

10:00 PM - *3 Нами Бог!* "Велике Повечір'я" "God is with us" Great Complines

Followed by Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25 – *THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For All Parishioners

Let's go Caroling!

Between December 25 and February 2 we will be organizing visits to our parishioners, shut-ins, and nursing homes. If you are interested in participating or you would like to be visited or you know of someone who would like to be visited, please contact Fr. James.

Thank You!

To all the ladies and gentlemen who made varenyky. Your generosity, hard work and dedication are greatly appreciated. You deserve a hearty "Well Done!"

Flower Collection

Special envelopes are available in the back of the church do help with the purchase of flowers for the Feast of the Nativity.

Mark your calendars!

On Saturday January 14 we will celebrate the New Year with a meal of Traditional Ukrainian foods including varenyky, holubtsi, borshcht and kutya.

Adults: \$20.00 (\$25.00 after January 1)

Youth (13-18): \$15.00

Children (12 and under): \$5.00

Tickets are available starting today

Welcome Visitors

We warmly welcome all those who are visiting us today. It is good to have you all with us!

Suggestions for Celebrating Christmas

1. Give thanks to God by attending church.
2. Seek peace with those we may be at odds with.
3. Give an anonymous gift to a stranger in need.



Prosphora for use at the Holy Supper (*Свята Вечір*) will be distributed today at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Church Decorating

Please come on Tuesday, December 20th at 10:00 AM to help decorate the Church for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord.

The Increase in the price of oil affects many things

Due to the continually rising cost, it is necessary to raise the requested donation for the 7-day candles to \$5.00. This is because those candles are made from petroleum. (That is also why, over time, they deposit black residue on the walls and ceiling.) The offering for the beeswax tapers (which burn much more cleanly) remains \$1.00.

НАВЕЧІР'Я ХРИСТОВОГО РІЗДВА

“Час нашого спасення вже настав. Готуйся, вертепе, бо Діва надходить, щоб родити” (Стихира вечірні наведір'я).

Свято Христового Різдва належить до найбільших празників нашого церковного року. Тож свята Церква, маючи на увазі велич і значення цього празника, з року в рік готує своїх вірних до зустрічі з нашим Спасителем молитвою і постом. Цій меті служить Пилипівка, передпразничні богослужби та відправи в день наведір'я Різдва. Що ближче до Христового Різдва, то щораз частіше у стихирах, канонах та тропарях наших богослужб говориться про ви́флеємські ясла, де має спочити Божий Син, про Його Пресвяту Матір Марію, святого Йосифа Обручника, про вертеп, зізду, ангелів, пастухів і царів.

Вершиною цього святкового приготування є наведір'я Різдва. Це день чування, молитви й посту. Має завітати гість із самого неба, тож треба гідно приготуватися до його приходу. Святвечір має не тільки глибокі змістом церковні відправи, але передусім він багатий у нашому народі на повні символики обряди і звичаї, деякі з яких сягають ще дохристиянських часів.

ДУХОВНЕ ПРИГОТУВАННЯ В РОДИНІ

День наведір'я завершує Чотиридесятницю перед Різдом. Цього дня обов'язковий строгий цілоденний піст. Уся родина відчуває, що сьогодні ввечері до неї має завітати дуже бажаний небесний гість. Звідси впливає той глибоко святковий і духовний настрій у родині. Наші предки високо цінували й ревно дотримувалися посту цього дня аж до появи вечірньої зірки. Київський митрополит Максим (1283-1305) у

Christmas Eve

“The time of our salvation has arrived. Prepare yourself, O Manger, for the Virgin is on her way to give birth.” (Stichera of the Eve of Christmas)

The feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ is ranked among the greatest feasts of our Church Year. Therefore, holy Church, mindful of the majesty and significance of this feast, encourages the faithful to prepare by prayer and fasting for this Encounter with our Saviour. The Pylypiwka (Philip's Fast), the pre-festal services, and the celebrations on the Eve of the Nativity serve this purpose. The closer we approach to the Feast of the Nativity, the more and more frequently in the sticheras, canons and troparions of our services, the manger in Bethlehem, where the Son God was to be born, his Most Holy Mother Mary, St. Joseph, her Spouse, the cave, the star, the angels and the other accompaniments of His birth, are mentioned.

This festal preparation reaches its peak on the Eve of the Nativity. It is a day of watching, prayer and fasting. The guest from heaven is about to arrive, therefore, it is necessary to prepare for his coming worthily. The Holy Eve of the Nativity has not only its own church significant services; it is also rich in symbolic rites and customs, some of which go back to pre-Christian times.

The Spiritual Preparation at Home

The eve of Christmas brings the Forty Days Christmas fast to a close. A strict fast is prescribed for this entire day. The whole family feels that on that day a very important heavenly guest will arrive in the evening, and therefore, a deeply festal and spiritual mood pervades the home. Our ancestors highly respected and zealously observed the fast of this day until the appearance of the evening star. Kievan Metropolitan, Maxim (1283-1305), in his rules on fasting says, that even if it be Saturday or Sunday on



своєму правилі про пости каже, що в який би день навечір'я Різдва не випадало, навіть у суботу й неділю, треба того дня зберігати строгий піст. І щойно після вечірні він дозволяє поживитися хлібом і вином. Такий самий піст він наказує зберігати і в навечір'я Богоявлення.

Крім посту, наші предки від найдавніших часів до празника Христового Різдва приготувалися сповіддю і святим причастям. Ця гарна священна традиція походить ще з першого віку християнської України від київського митрополита Юрія (1072). Цю святу практику поручає у своєму требнику митрополит Петро Могила, поручають її також наші Замойський і Львівський Синоди.

Давній слов'янський Пролог у своєму повчанні на 24 грудня має таку духовну заохоту для вірних, які зустрічатимуть празник Христового Різдва: “Знайте, брати, що цього дня піст перед празником Христового Різдва. Тому цього дня з любов'ю і чистотою зберіться в шостий час (12 год. полудня) на молитву, перемігши гнів, очистивши тілесні провини, і всі недобрі діла відкинувши, щоб ми стали достойні чистими устами й непорочним серцем причаститися Божого Тіла, що в нього задля нас одягнувся Господь і добровільно став убогим”.

СВЯТВЕЧІРНІ ОБРЯДИ І ЗВИЧАЇ

Колись ще в дохристиянські часи наші прадіди під час сучасного святкування Христового Різдва, мали свято “Корочуна” — день привітання сонця. “Свято “Корочуна”, — каже проф. С. Килимник, — цілком хліборобське, було в ті далекі часи імпульсом надхнення людини, надією і вірою у щасливий рік урожаю, приплоду худоби, здоров'я, добробуту та радісного життя господаря... Свято “Корочуна” з різноманітними обрядами ритуалами, відправами, молитвами, магічними актами (діями) — виступає і сьогодні досить яскраво в нашій Різдві... “Корочун” Руси-України, що покритися Святим Різдвом, — це виняткове, багате, веселе, радісне й велике свято, що відрізняється від подібних свят інших народів своєю особливою обрядовістю, багатством фольклору, взагалі оригінальністю етнографії,

which the Eve of the Nativity falls, on that day a strict fast must be kept. Only after the Vespers service is one allowed to strengthen oneself with bread and wine. He orders that the same kind of fast be observed also on the Eve of the Theophany.

From earliest times, besides fasting, our ancestors prepared themselves for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord with confession and Holy Communion. This very beautiful and holy tradition comes from the first centuries of Christianity in Ukraine; it began with the Kievan Metropolitan George (1072). This holy practice was prescribed by Metropolitan Peter Mohyla, in his Euchologion, and also by the Synods of Zamost and L'viv.

An old Slavonic Prologue for the 24th of December contains the following spiritual exhortation to the faithful in reference to greeting the feast of the Nativity of Christ: “Take note brethren, that there is a fast on the day before this feast of the Nativity of Christ. Therefore, on this day, at the Sixth Hour (12 o'clock noon), we gather together for prayer, with love and purity, overcoming anger, purifying carnal desires, and renouncing all evil deeds so that we may be made worthy with pure lips and an undefiled heart to partake of the Body of the Lord, that same Body which the Lord took upon Himself and willingly became poor.”

The Rites and Customs of Christmas Eve

In pre-Christian times, our ancestors, at the same time in which the Nativity of Christ is now celebrated, kept the feast of “Korochun” — the day of greeting the sun. “The feast of ‘Korochun’,” says Professor S. Kylymnyk, “is altogether an agricultural feast. In those remote times, this feast commemorated the impulse of human inspiration, hope and faith in the prospect of a good harvest, a new increase in cattle, continued health and well-being, and a happy life for the farmer... Today, the feast of “Korochun” with its manifold rites, celebrations, prayers and rituals — is clearly reflected in our fest of the Nativity of Christ... The feast “Korochun” of Rus-Ukraine, which was replaced by the Holy Nativity is singularly rich, happy, joyful and a great feast. It differs from similar feasts of other nations in its special rituals, in its wealth of folklore, in its originality of ethnography, and in its very firm preservation of our ancient prehistoric culture by the ethnic masses. This feast is the document

найглибшою захованістю в народніх масах нашої давньої передісторичної культури. Це свято є свідченням глибокої доісторичної дійсності не лише вірувань, світогляду, але й наших культурних, політичних та економічних зв'язків і взаємин із всесвітом... Наша Церква ті гарні звичаї — рештки первісної культури — врешті прийняла, але, як і мусить бути, вклала в усе це християнські ідеали, християнську мораль, нові ідеї — правди, любови, всепрощення, щедроти, удосконалення. Але характерним, що в основі різдвяних звичаїв зберіглося й досі все те, що пов'язано було в ті далекі часи з хліборобським господарством, з пастушеством: яскраво виступають у звичаях істотні риси українця — працьовитість, гостинність, чесність, доброта, співучість, єдність і святість родини; шанування пам'яті покійників і т.п.”

Головне завдання родини в час святвечора це гідно приготувати себе і свою душу, свою хату і своє господарство до празника Христового Різдва. Господиня дому порається, щоб гарно прибрати хату всередині та надати їй святкового настрою. Найбільше часу вона присвячує приготуванню Святої вечері. Ця вечеря, хоч пісна, але багата, бо має аж 12 традиційних страв. Звідси і її назва — Багата кутя.

Чому на цю вечерю готують саме 12 страв? На це питання знаходимо відповідь у вищеназваному творі проф. С. Килимника. “На основі глибоких досліджень, — каже він, — приходять до думки, що 12 страв це тому, що протягом року “місяць оббігає землю 12 разів”. Отже, кожному місяцю наче присвячена страва. Подруге, на Багату кутю мусять бути приготовлені страви з усієї городини та садовини, що тільки є в господарстві, щоб усім цим прийняти й бога врожаю і святі душі дідівпрадівів... А вони, покуштувавши всього цього, дадуть у цьому році ще більший врожай”

Між стравами Святої вечері на першому місці стоїть кутя, або коливо. Це варена пшениця з медом. Деякі автори дотримуються думки, що кутя це останок давніх братолюбних столів, які готували у дні смерті мучеників або померлих. Пшениця, як зерно, щороку оживає, тому є

of our profound prehistoric reality, not only of belief and world outlook, but also of our cultural, political and economic ties and relations with the world as a whole...Our Church adopted these beautiful customs —remnants of a primitive culture — but invested all these with Christian ideals, morals, and virtues, such as truth, love, forgiveness, generosity and spiritual perfection...But the basis of all the Christmas customs are those which were associated in remote times with agricultural and the pastoral life. These have been preserved to the present day and include all the characteristic features of the Ukrainian People; industry, hospitality, honesty, goodness, a love for singing, unity and reverence for the sanctity of the family life; respect for the memory of the departed, etc.” (The Ukrainian Folk Year from the Historical Perspective...Vol I, pp. 13-14)

The main duty of the members of each family on Holy Eve (Christmas Eve) is to prepare themselves, their house and farm for the feast of the Nativity of the Lord. The housewife is occupied with putting the house in order so that it will look beautiful, and with giving it a festive look. She spends most of her time in preparing Holy Supper. This Supper, though meatless, is rich, for it includes as many as twelve traditional courses. Hence, its name “bahata Kutya” (bahata — rich; kutya — boiled wheat mixed with honey).

Why are twelve courses served at the Holy Supper? We find the answer to this question in the above-mentioned work of Professor S. Kylymnyk. “On the basis of profound research,” he says, “it may be said that twelve courses are served at Holy Eve Supper because throughout the course of the year the moon circles the earth twelve times. Thus, each course represents a single month. Secondly, the “Bahata Kutya” consists of every kind of vegetable and fruit that is on the farm, so that, with all this, the family could receive the gold of the harvest and the holy souls of the ancestors...And the ancestors, in turn, partaking of all this food, give that year still a greater harvest.”

Among the courses of Holy Supper, “kutya” or “kolyvo” is the most important. This is boiled wheat with honey. There are those who are of the opinion that “kutya” is a remnant of the ancient love banquets (agapes), which were prepared on the day of the death of a Martyr or deceased beloved. Wheat, as a seed,

символом вічності, а мед це символ вічного щастя святих у небі.

Коли господиня порається в хаті, то господар приводить до порядку своє обійстя, напуває і годує худібку. З настанням вечора він з особливою церемонією вносить до хати Дідуха — сніп пшениці і ставить його на покутті. “Дідух-Рай”, — каже проф. С. Килимник, — крім перебування духів дідів та бога врожаю, символізував ще й новорічний урожай, добробут, багатство та долю людей... Ось чому така шана Дідухові, ось чому його несуть у хату з такою святістю, як і принесли з поля з почестями; тому і ставлять його на самому почесному місці.

До хати вносять також сіно й солому. Сіно кладуть під обрус на стіл, а солому на долівку. Подекуди в нас цю солому звали також дідухом. Усе відбувається за означеним обрядом, з промовами, побажаннями чи замовляннями. Під столом на долівці ставлять різні господарські знаряддя: сокиру, косу, серп і т. п., щоб на цілій господарці спочивало благословення.

Свята вечеря вже готова. На небі з’явилася вечірня зоря. Батько родини засвічує свічку на столі. Уся родина святочно вбрана, спільно молиться і сідає за стіл до Святої вечері. Батько складає цілій родині побажання. Вечерю починають кутею з різними церемоніями і приговорюванням. На святвечір не забувають і про душі померлих членів родини. Для них ставлять окрему мисочку з кутею на столі або вікні, бо вірять, що сьогодні й вони беруть участь у Святій вечері. Після вечері вся родина вітає Христове Різдво колядами й колядками.



revives each year; hence, it is the symbol of eternity, and honey is the symbol of the eternal happiness of the Saints in heaven.

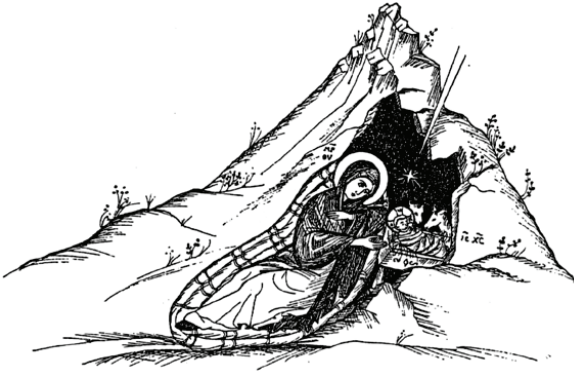
While the housewife is busy preparing food and decorating, the husband is occupied putting his farm in order, and waters and feeds the cattle. With the approach of evening, in a special ceremony, he brings a sheaf of straw (called Didukh) into the house, and places it in the corner by the dining table. “The Didukh-Raj,” says Professor S. Kylymnyk, “in addition to symbolizing the presence of the spirits of the ancestors and the god of the harvest, also symbolizes the harvest of the new year, prosperity, affluence and human destiny... Hence, great respect is shown the Didukh; it is brought into the house with the same piety and reverence and ceremony with which it was brought from the field, and it is given a place of honor in the house.

Straw and hay are also brought into the house. The hay is placed under the tablecloth while the straw is placed on the floor. In certain localities, this straw was also called “didukh”. All this takes place according to a prescribed rite which includes speeches, well-wishings and appropriate chants. Various agricultural tools, such as an axe, a scythe, sickle, etc. are placed under the table, to indicate that God’s blessing is desired on all the work of the farm.

Holy Supper is now prepared. As soon as the evening star appears in the sky, the head of the house lights a candle on the table. The whole family, dressed in festive attire, prays together and then sits down to the Holy Supper. The father then extends good wishes to the entire family, and they begin the Supper with Kutya”, accompanied by various ceremonies and incantations. During the Holy Supper, the souls of the departed of the family are remembered, and a separate dish with “kutya” is set for them on the table or window sill, for it is believed that the departed souls also share in the Holy Supper. After supper, the whole family greets the Nativity of our Lord by singing carols and exchanging gifts.

ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos



The Birth of Christ is a historical event, because it took place at a specific moment in history, when Caesar Augustus was Emperor in Rome and Herod was ruler of Judea. The Evangelists insist on emphasizing the historicity of the event, because they want to say that Christ is a historical person. This means that Christ assumed real human flesh, and the Incarnation was not merely seeming or imagined.

In spite of its historicity, this event remains a mystery. We know that the Godman, perfect God and perfect man, exists, but it remains a mystery how the divine nature united with human nature in the person of the Logos. Moreover, what happened to the person of Christ, that the divine nature was united hypostatically with human nature, happened just once. Therefore St. John of Damascus said that Christ is “the only new thing under the sun.” This means that since the creation of the world and man, nothing new has happened in the world. Everything is repeated [according to the natural order and rules which govern the universe]. The [successive] birth of human beings is a consequence and result of God’s words: “Let us make man in our image and likeness”, and “Be fruitful and multiple; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:26-28). The only new thing is the Godman Christ.

Thus the fact that the event is historical does not remove the mystery, but also the mystery does not do away with the historicity. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Christ, but at the same time we experience mysteriously in our hearts all the events connected with it, for when we are alive in the Church, we are participating in and experiencing all the stages of the divine Incarnation.

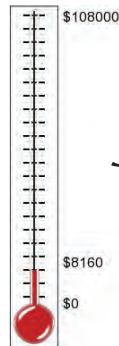
Sunday offering for December 11

Amount	Number
\$10.00	3
\$12.00	1 (loose)
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$25.00	3
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	5
\$60.00	1
\$75.00	2
\$100.00	1
\$150.00	1
\$28.00	1 (loose)
\$40.00	1
\$75.00	1
\$100.00	1
\$125.00	1
<hr/>	
\$992.00	28

Average / household (38): \$26.11

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Shortfall: -\$1133.00



Stewardship Pledges

Pledges received: 3

CHRISTMAS AND THEOPHANY

THE INCARNATION AND MANIFESTATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST



Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker

December 6th

When you appeared in a dream to Constantine the King, you gave him this warning: Release at once from prison those you have unjustly confined, for they are innocent; no murder did they commit as you claim. O King, listen to me, or else I shall call upon the Lord.

O holy Nicholas, holy preacher of Christ, always ready to help all on land or at sea. Whether they be near or far, you have compassion for all. You are a precious helper; therefore, we who gather here ask you to pray to the Lord that we be delivered from all distress and sorrow.

Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs

Today we commemorate the ancestors of Christ. Sing with fervor a hymn of praise to Christ the Savior who exalted them among all nations. He is the Lord who does wondrous deeds because He is powerful and mighty. From them He brought forth a royal scepter, the immaculate maiden of God and virgin Mary. From her, Christ our God came forth to give life and eternal salvation for all.

The three holy youths were refreshed by the Holy Spirit when they walked in the fire as in a cool place. In them the Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ were prefigured in a mystical manner. By their wisdom and faith they overcame the power of fire. As for the just Daniel, he stopped the mouths of lions. Through their intercession, we beseech You: O Savior and Lover of Mankind, protect us from eternal fire and make us worthy of your heavenly kingdom.





Sunday of the Holy Fathers

The commemoration of the Holy Fathers is manifested to the ends of the world. It is truly of splendor, and it glistens with the rays of grace; for Christ the splendrous Sun has shone forth on high from afar. He forms the assembly of stars which glisten with Him, and the star reveals that the nativity of the God-man will be in Bethlehem. Therefore, we piously and faithfully clap our hands and leap for joy at this nativity, and we give praise before the feast.

The Holy Fathers are adorned by the glory of the divine sharing of our nature. Adam rejoices today, since he is the foundation and the strength of the wise Forefathers; Abel leaps for joy as well. Enoch is glad; Seth and Noah dance together. The praiseworthy Abraham sings with the Patriarchs. Melchisedek now sees from on high the birth without a father.

Nativity of Our Lord

December 25th

O Christ our God, your kingdom is eternal, and your reign is from generation to generation. You became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and became man from the ever-virgin Mary. Your coming, O Christ, has shed a great light upon us. You are the Light of Light and the radiance of the Father. You have illumined the whole creation. Therefore, everything that breathes sings a hymn of praise to You. You are the image of the Father's glory. You are the eternal God, existing before all ages, who shone forth from the Virgin. O Lord our God, have mercy on us.





Synaxis of the Holy Mother of God

December 26th

O Christ, what shall we offer You for your coming on earth in our humanity for our sake? Every creature that has its being from You gives thanks to You: the angels offer hymns of praise, the heavens give a star; the Magi present their gifts and the shepherds, their wonder; the earth provides a cave and the desert, a manger. As for us, we offer a Virgin Mother. O God who are from all eternity, have mercy on us.

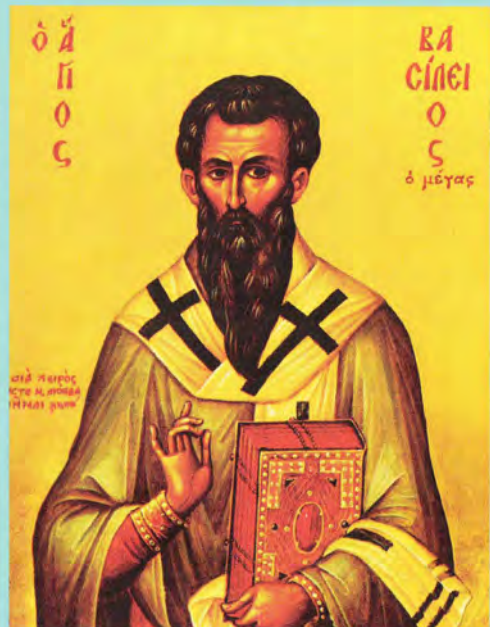
Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth. Today Bethlehem receives the One who at all times sits with the Father. Today the angels sing the praises of the newborn infant. Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and good will to all.

Saint Basil the Great

January 1st

You have been called by the name of Basil, after the kingdom. In your kingly rank you led the people of Christ to wisdom and knowledge. Then the Lord of all and King of Kings adorned you with the crown of the kingdom, O Basil. He is the everlasting and co-eternal Son who was united to her that bore Him. Therefore, intercede with Him that He may enlighten and save our souls.

Adorned with the vestments of a bishop, O Basil, you gladly proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and poured out the teachings of the true faith for the Church. Now enlightened by them, we confess and glorify the one Godhead, indivisible in three Persons; namely the Almighty Father, the only-begotten Word of God, and the Divine Spirit. Intercede with Him that He may enlighten and save our souls.





Theophany of Our Lord in the Jordan

January 6th

When the Jordan received You, O Fountainhead, the Comforter descended in the form of a dove. Now behold the marvel: the One who bowed the heavens bows his head to the Forerunner, and the one made of clay cries out to his Maker: Why do you command me to perform what is beyond my power? It is I who need to be baptized by You. O Christ our God, O Sinless One, glory to You!

You have bowed your head before the Forerunner, and You have crushed the heads of the demons. You have descended into the waters and given light to all things that they may glorify You, O Savior, and Enlightenment of our souls.

Synaxis of John the Baptist

January 7th

The Forerunner said to the Creator: For my part I am held back, and I do not know where to flee. O generous One, You are the river of delight. How is it, therefore, that the streams of the river receive You as You enter them? To all those who venerate your holy manifestation, You pour out salvation, O Word!

O luminary in the flesh and Forerunner of the Savior, O offspring of the barren one, O friend, by leaping in the womb you adored the One who is born of the Virgin; and you baptized Him in the waters of the Jordan. O prophet, we pray to you: Implore Him that we may escape the future torments.



All text from Vesper Stichera of each feastday in The Festal Menaion, Sisters of Saint Basil, Uniontown, PA



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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.

Father Raymond E. Brown, S.S.