



The Messenger

Sunday, December 24, 2023
Κυριακή, 24 Δεκέμβριος

Sunday Before Nativity
Κυριακή πρό τῆς Χριστοῦ
Γεννήσεως

Weekly Worship Guide

The Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation • Atlanta, GA

Eve of the Nativity of Christ
Eugenia the Righteous Nun-martyr of Rome and those with her

The Midwives View of the Birth of Christ



As blessed Jerome writes that on the precise moment, “No midwife assisted at His birth; no women’s officiousness intervened. With her (Mary’s) own hands she wrapped Him in the swaddling clothes--herself both mother and midwife.” In the story from Protevangelium, we hear the cloud disappeared and a great light was shown in the cave so that the eyes could not bear it. Little by little, the light gradually decreased. They (the midwives) then beheld the infant at the breast of the Virgin. The old woman asked the Virgin Mary, “Art thou the mother of this Child?” When the Virgin gave her assent, Zelomi said, “Thou are not at all like the daughters of Eve.” The Virgin then said, “As my Son has not equal among children, so His Mother has no equal among women.”

St. Ephraim, in his Hymns on the Nativity, puts these words on Mary’s lips: Lo, of a sudden the handmaid became the King’s daughter in Thee, Thou Son of the King! Lo, the handmaid of the house of David, by reason of thee, became the King’s daughter, Thou Son of David! Lo, a daughter of earth hath attained unto heaven by the heavenly One!

The midwife then went forth out of the cave and met Salome, another midwife, to whom Zelomi exclaimed, “Salome I have a strange sight to relate to thee: a virgin hath brought forth, a thing which nature does not admit!”

The aged Salome was a kinswoman of Mary. Solome was Mary’s mother’s sister’s daughter; hence she was Mary’s first cousin. When she beheld the most holy Virgin in the shepherd’s cave, she did not believe that a virgin brought forth, to which she remarked, “As the Lord my God liveth, unless I receive proof of this matter, I will not believe that a virgin hath brought forth.” When the midwife Salome stretched forth her hand to the most holy Virgin’s body to examine it, her hand withered. She came to believe, but was groaning bitterly; for she was punished for her impudence and unbelief. Greatly lamenting, Salome made a supplication unto the Lord, until an angel stood by her and instructed her to reach forth her hand to the Child and to carry Him. Forthwith, Salome’s hand was restored and she was filled with joy.

Compiled from “The Life of the Virgin Mary the Theotokos”

Order of Hymns Following The Small Entrance

Αναστάσιμον Απολυτίκιον. Ἦχος δ'.

Τὸ φαιδρὸν τῆς ἀναστάσεως κήρυγμα, ἐκ τοῦ Ἀγγέλου μαθούσαι αἱ τοῦ Κυρίου Μαθήτριάι, καὶ τὴν προγονικὴν ἀπόφασιν ἀποόρῳψασαι, τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις καυχώμεναι ἔλεγον· Ἐσκύλευται ὁ θάνατος, ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός, δωροῦμενος τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

Απολυτίκιον Προεόρτιον. Ἦχος δ'.

Ἀπεγράφετο ποτέ, σὺν τῷ προεσβύτῃ Ἰωσήφ, ὡς ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυῖδ, ἐν Βηθλεὲμ ἡ Μαριάμ, κυφοροῦσα τὴν ἄσπορον κυφοροῖαν. Ἐπέστη δὲ καιρὸς ὁ τῆς Γεννήσεως, καὶ τόπος ἦν οὐδεὶς τῷ καταλύματι· ἀλλ' ὡς τερπνὸν παλάτιον τὸ Σπήλαιον, τῇ Βασιλίδι ἐδείκνυτο. Χριστὸς γεννᾶται τὴν πρὶν πεσοῦσαν, ἀναστήσων εἰκόνα.

Απολυτίκιον τῶν Πατέρων. Ἦχος β'.

Μεγάλα τὰ τῆς πίστεως κατορθώματα! Ἐν τῇ πηγῇ τῆς φλογός, ὡς ἐπὶ ὕδατος ἀναπαύσεως, οἱ ἅγιοι Τρεῖς Παῖδες ἠγάλλοντο, καὶ ὁ προφήτης Δανιήλ, λεόντων ποιμὴν, ὡς προβάτων ἐδείκνυτο. Ταῖς αὐτῶν ἰκεσίαις Χριστὲ ὁ Θεός, σῶσον τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

Απολυτίκιον τῆς Ἀγίας. Ἦχος γ'.

Θείας πίστεως.

Θείου Πνεύματος τῇ ὑμνωδίᾳ, φῶς προσέλαβες θεογνωσίας, Εὐγενία Χριστοῦ καλλιπάρθενε· καὶ ἐν ὀσίων χορεία ἐκλάμψασα, ἀθλητικῶς τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἐθριάμβευσας. Μάρτυς ἐνδοξε, Χριστὸν τὸν Θεὸν ἰκέτευε δωρίσασθαι ἡμῖν τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

Απολυτίκιον τοῦ Ναοῦ. Ἦχος δ'.

Σήμερον τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν τὸ Κεφάλαιον, καὶ τοῦ ἀπ' αἰῶνος Μυστηρίου ἡ φανέρωσις, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, Υἱὸς τῆς Παρθένου γίνεται, καὶ Γαβριὴλ τὴν χάριν εὐαγγελίζεται. Διὸ καὶ ἡμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ τῇ Θεοτόκῳ βοήσωμεν· Χαῖρε Κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ.

Κοντάκιον. Ἦχος γ'.

Αὐτόμελον.

Ἡ Παρθένος σήμερον, τὸν προαιώνιον Λόγον, ἐν Σπηλαίῳ ἔρχεται, ἀποτεκεῖν ἀποόρῳτῶς. Χορευε ἡ οἰκουμένη ἀκουτισθεῖσα, δόξασον μετὰ Ἀγγέλων καὶ τῶν Ποιμένων, βουληθέντα ἐποφθῆναι, Παιδίον νέον, τὸν πρὸ αἰῶνων Θεόν.

Resurrectional Apolytikion. Mode 4.

When the women disciples of the Lord heard the Angel joyously proclaim the resurrection, they cast aside the ancestral verdict, and boasting in glory they said to the Apostles, "Death has been despoiled! Christ God has risen, granting the great mercy to the world!"

Apolytikion of the Forefeast. Mode 4.

As she carried in her womb * what she conceived without seed, * Mary went to Bethlehem * with elder Joseph to enroll, * for they were of the house and the lineage of David. * The time arrived for her * to give birth to her Child; * but then there was no place * in the inn for them. * Therefore the grotto served as a luxurious * royal palace for the Queen. * And Christ the Lord is born, to raise the image * which was formerly fallen.

Apolytikion of the Fathers. Mode 2.

Magnificent are the accomplishments of faith! The holy Three Servants greatly rejoiced, as they stood in the fountain of fire, as if beside the still waters; and the Prophet Daniel appeared to be a shepherd of lions, as if they were sheep. At their entreaties, O Christ God, save our souls.

Apolytikion of the Saint. Mode 3.

Your confession.

Being mystically moved by the Spirit, you sang God's praise, thereby receiving the clear light of divine knowledge in you heart; and shining bright as the sun with a righteous life, you overcame the devil in martyrdom. O Eugenia, most glorious Martyr of the Lord, entreat Christ God to grant great mercy to us.

Apolytikion of the Church. Mode 4.

Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the mystery which was hidden from eternity. The Son of God becomes the Virgin's Son, and Gabriel announces the grace of this Good News. Let us also join with him, calling to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Woman full of grace; the Lord is with you.

Kontakion. Mode 3.

Automelon.

On this day the Virgin Maid * goes to the grotto to give birth * to the pre-eternal Word * in an ineffable manner. * Dance for joy, all the inhabited earth, on hearing. * Glorify along with Angels and with the shepherds * Him who willed that He appear as * a newborn Child, * the pre-eternal God.

Epistle (St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10;32-40)

Reader: Alexia Spetseris

PROKEIMENON: Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers.

VERSE: For you are just in all you have done.

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Gospel (Matthew 1:1-25)

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

DIVINE LITURGY CONTINUES ON PAGE 51 OF THE DIVINE LITURGY BOOK

Reminders for Receiving Holy Communion

Holy Communion is offered in the Orthodox Church only to those individuals baptized and/or chrismated (confirmed) in the Orthodox Faith. To participate in Holy Communion one must be in good standing with the Church spiritually (for example, married people must have had their marriage blessed in the Church; and, all must be without grave sin on their hearts). For all Orthodox Christians, the proper preparation for Holy Communion must be observed: that is, examination of conscience, confession, reading the prayers for Holy Communion, and the proper fasting. If you have any further questions about this, please speak with the clergy. Women should remove all lipstick when approaching for Holy Communion.

Thank you.

Support our Cathedral

Welcome, everyone!

We extend a warm welcome to our visitors worshipping with us today in our Cathedral. You are invited to join us for our fellowship following the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy in Carlos Hall next to the Church. Thank you for your visit! Please stop by our hospitality table and sign the register in the Narthex.

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Contact us

2500 Clairmont Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

office@atlgoc.org
(404) 633-5870
Fax (404) 633-6018

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