

*From the Divine Office for the Forefeast of the Nativity (Dec. 20)*

*O nations, let us be eager and celebrate before its time the Nativity of Christ! Let us lift up our minds and hearts to Bethlehem, and imagine the Virgin on her way to the cave to give birth to the Lord of all, our God, the stupendous Wonder which Joseph contemplated and took for a mere human child wrapped in swaddling clothes. But when he had seen all, he became certain the Child was the true God who grants mercy to our souls. (Vespers)*

*The holy sayings of the prophet have been fulfilled in the city of Bethlehem within a cave. The whole creation is made rich; let it rejoice and be of good cheer. The Master of all has come to live with His servants, and from the bondage of the Enemy He delivers us who were made subject to corruption. In swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, he is made manifest as a new Child being God from all eternity. (Orthros)*



**SUNDAY OF BEFORE THE NATIVITY  
DECEMBER 19, 2021**



**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**  
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**Email: Brymc56@comcast.net Cell: (978) 314-1962**  
**Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM**

**Antiphon (1st)**

1: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; sing praise to His name.

**Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.**

2: Say to God: How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cringe before You.

***Be shafa'ati Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhallisu, khallisna.***

3: Let all the earth worship You and sing praises to You; let it sing praises to Your name, O Most High!

**Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.**

**Entrance Hymn**

**Priest:** Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ.

**People:** O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You. Alleluia.

**Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 5) pg. 40**

Let us, O faithful, praise and worship the Word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our Salvation, for He was pleased to be lifted in the flesh upon the cross, and to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious resurrection.

**Troparion of the Ancestors (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

**Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) pg. 15**

In giving birth, you preserved your virginity, and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life, being the Mother of Life. Through your intercessions, save our souls from death.

**Kondakion of the Preparation of the Nativity of our Lord (Tone 3)**

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. Rejoice, therefore, O Universe, when you hear this news, and glorify with the angels and the shepherds, Him who shall appear a new Child being God from all eternity.

The why of the Incarnation, according to the Apostle Paul is our deification. The how of the Incarnation is what has been called the kenosis (self-emptying) of Christ: His voluntary putting aside of divine glory and putting on “the form of a bondservant” (our humanity). As man He further humbled Himself by submitting to all the circumstances of time, place and state of life which we find described in the Gospels. He put on the condition of a village carpenter who became an itinerant preacher, challenging the religious status quo of the Jewish establishment supported by Rome. Little wonder that His path led to the death of the cross. When St Paul says that we should “let this mind be in you” as it was in Christ, He is echoing the Lord Jesus, who proposed humility as the hallmark of the Christian. After the Lord had washed His disciples’ feet, He told them, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (Jn 13:14, 15). The Lord was not proposing that His disciples be characterized by actual foot-washing, but by humble service to one another. As the Word of God exchanged His heavenly glory for the manger in a Bethlehem cave, His followers must learn to exchange their views of their own self-importance for the “form of a bondservant.” In this way, the humility of Christ rather than human “wisdom” will direct our actions. In addition to humility, the mind of Christ according to the Scriptures is characterized chiefly by dependence on God and compassion toward others. Developing a mindset of humility, dependence and compassion is contrary to the way of thinking most people learn from the society and culture that surrounds us. It requires continual attention and effort to maintain our focus on the mind of Christ. “Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and be holy in all your conduct ... as He who called you is holy” (1 Pt 1:13, 15).

**St Athanasios on the Incarnation**

“What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it we might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ? We could not have done it, for we are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image. “The Word perceived that corruption could not be got rid of otherwise than through death; yet He Himself, as the Word, being immortal and the Father’s Son, could not die. For this reason, therefore, He assumed a body capable of death, ... By surrendering to death the body which He had taken, as an offering and sacrifice free from every stain, He abolished death for His human brethren ... Naturally also, through this union of the immortal Son of God with our human nature, all men were clothed with incorruption in the promise of the resurrection. For the solidarity of mankind is such that, by the Word’s indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all” (On the Incarnation 34, 35).



### DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today Healing of Archie Opatka

December 24 Healing of Archie Opatka

Health and Salvation of our families and friends.

Deceased members of our families and friends.

+Raymond Yanni (3 Yr.). Requested by Mae Yanni

December 25 Healing of Archie Opatka

Health and Salvation of our families and friends.

Deceased members of our families and friends.

This morning's coffee hour is hosted by Houda Daou

Next Sunday's coffee hour is hosted by Ryan and Tina Dumont

### Last Week's Collection

Weekly \$ 950

Candles \$ 16

Coffee Hr. \$ 35

Stole \$ 50

Christmas Flowers \$ 50

TOTAL \$1,101

God bless you for your generosity!



### CHRISTMAS DIVINE LITURGIES

**Fri 12/24, 4PM - Vesper/Liturgy of St. Basil**

**Sat 12/25, 10AM—Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom**

### UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

**Wed 1/5, 6PM—Great Vespers for the Feast of the Theophany**

**Thu 1/6, 6PM - Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Theophany followed by the Great Blessing of Water.**

**Please go to [archiesarmy.net](http://archiesarmy.net) to see updates on Archie Opatka's battle heptoblastoma. "O Christ, Physician of our souls and bodies, heal, bless and have mercy on Your child Archie!"**



### THE BISHOP'S APPEAL

As we prepare our hearts and our homes to receive the greatest gift in human history—the Nativity of Christ our God—let us not forget our Melkite Church by which Christ comes to our families and loved ones. **Please give a special end-of-year, tax-deductible gift to the Melkite Church** to support all the vital works of our Church in America, and for our suffering and persecuted brothers and sisters.

May God bless you for your generosity.

### Welcome

**Fr. Lucas LaRoche is celebrating the Divine Liturgy this morning. Please say hello to him during the coffee hour.**

The 2022 calendar will be available in the church beginning with the Christmas Liturgies. Please pick one up. We will not be mailing the calendar *en masse* this year. I will be sending the calendar to folks I know who cannot get to church. If you or someone you know cannot get to church to pick up a calendar, please let me know and I'll be happy to send them one.

## Taking the Form of a Bondservant

BEGINNING STUDENTS OF JOURNALISM or other disciplines involving research are taught the importance of the “Five Ws” in compiling information. Fact-finders must be able to answer the following questions on any subject they are investigating: Who (was involved)? What (happened)? When (did it take place)? Where (did it take place)? And Why (did that happen)? In reflecting on the incarnation of the Word of God, we focus on the last question: why did Christ become man? Our answer is that the reason He assumed our human nature – His incarnation – is to change us by making us partakers of the divine nature (theosis). As the Church Fathers never ceased to repeat: God became human so that man might be deified. But the answer to that question brings us to ask another one: how do we become deified? The Scriptures give us a two-part answer: our deification results initially from being united to Christ at baptism. We maintain this gift of our deification by “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14) in the way we conduct our lives.

### We Have Put on Christ in Baptism

The hymn sung repeatedly at baptisms – drawn from St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians – affirms the teaching that we “put on” Christ at our baptism. As the Incarnation began with a concrete, physical act, the conception of the Lord Jesus, so our deification begins with the concrete, physical act of baptism. In this mystery, the earthly humanity of a believer is joined to the divinized humanity of Christ. The believer is organically united to Christ, immersed in Him, just as he is immersed into the water. The believer has clothed himself with Christ, a spiritual reality symbolized by the white baptismal garment. St Paul frequently reminds his readers how their likeness to God has been restored in baptism through the image of “putting-off” and “putting-on.” He tells the Ephesians, “you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). He tells the Colossians, “you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col 3:10). Their divinization is a restoration of their likeness to God which was lost in Eden. According to the Scriptures, that “putting-on Christ” also connects us to the eternal God in a new way. As St Paul says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:26, 27). A person renewed in baptism is, in fact, no longer simply related to God as creature to Creator; the baptized is now an adopted son of God. Because of our baptism it is realistic to call God “Father.”

### We Must Put on Christ in Our Actions

In baptism we ontologically put on Christ. We are connected to Him on the level of our deepest nature. We must also put on Christ psychologically, on the level of our actions and perceptions. In other words, we must strive to think and act like Him. To do that, we must study the actions of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and begin to know His mind. Again, we must turn to St Paul, who gives us an entry into the mind of Christ, particularly in regard to the Incarnation. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:5-11).

### Prokimenon

**Reader:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever. .

**People:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

**Verse:** For You are just in all You have done to us, and all Your works are true and Your ways right.

**People:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

**Reader:** Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers,

**People:** And Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

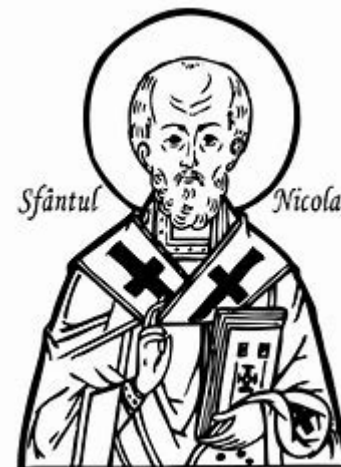
**Epistle:** Heb. 11:9-10; 32-40

### Alleluia Verses

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:** Mt. 1:1-25, Sunday Before the Nativity of our Lord - Genealogy



### ORDER OF SAINT NICHOLAS

**Bishop Nicholas has reactivated the Order of Saint Nicholas. The Order has done much to support the work of the Eparchy over the years. Please see the flyers in the back of the church for the bulletin boards for more details. Please prayerfully consider joining the Order.**