

### Hymns of Mary's Nativity

Today, God who dominates the Spiritual Thrones of Heaven, welcomes on earth the holy throne which He had prepared for Himself. In His love for mankind, He who established the heavens in wisdom had fashioned a living heaven. From a barren stem He has brought forth for us His Mother as a branch full of life. O God of miracles, and hope of those who have no hope, Lord, glory to You!

Today glad tidings go forth to the whole world. Today sweet fragrance is wafted forth by the proclamation of salvation. Today is the end of the barrenness of our nature, for the barren one becomes a mother, the mother of the one who by nature will not cease to be a virgin, even after giving birth to the One who by nature is Creator and God. He it is who took from her His flesh by which He wrought salvation for the lost: He, the Christ, the Lover of Mankind and Savior of our souls! (*Stichera at Vespers*)

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM



**Sunday Before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**  
**Nativity of the Theotokos**  
**September 8, 2019**

### **Antiphon (Feast)**

1. The Lord swore to David's firm promise from which He will not withdraw.

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

2. Your own Offspring I will set up on your throne.

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

3. The Lord has chosen Zion: He prefers her for his dwelling.

**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!**

### **Resurrectional Troparion (Tone 4, Pg. 40)**

The women disciples of the Lord, having learned from the angel the joyful announcement of the resurrection, and having rejected the ancestral sentence, proudly told the apostles: Death is spoiled. Christ God is risen, bestowing to the world great mercy."

### **Troparion of the Nativity (Tone 4) sung twice**

Your Nativity, O Mother of God, heralded joy to the whole universe, for from you rose the Sun of Justice, Christ our God. He canceled the curse and poured forth His grace: He vanquished death and granted us eternal life.

### **Kondakion of the Nativity (Tone 4)**

Through your holy birth, O Immaculate One, Joachim and Anne were delivered from the shame of childlessness, and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. Your people, redeemed from the debt of their sins, cry out to you to honor your birth: "the barren one gives birth to the Mother of God the Sustainer of our life!"

### **The Story of Mary's Birth**

The tradition preserved in the Protoevangelium is that Mary was the daughter of Joachim and Ann, born to them late in life. The literary embellishment in this work tells how Joachim, although a generous donor to the temple, was mocked for being childless. Recalling how Abraham had been given a child in his old age, Joachim retired to the wilderness to pray for a similar blessing. In response angels appeared to Joachim and Ann promising that their prayers have been heard and that Ann would conceive. Our feast of the Maternity of St Ann (December 9) recalls her conception of the Virgin Mary.

Then, "When her time was fulfilled, in the ninth month, Ann gave birth. And she said to the midwife: 'What have I brought forth?' And she said: 'A girl'. Then Ann said: 'My soul has been magnified this day.' ... when the days were fulfilled, Ann was purified, and gave her breast to the child, and called her name Mary" (Protoevangelium 5).

### **The Place of Mary's Birth**

The Protoevangelium does not identify the place where Mary was born. Different local traditions claim at least two possible locations: the village of Sepphoris, a few miles from Nazareth, and the neighborhood of the "shepherd's pool" in the old city of Jerusalem. Byzantine basilicas were constructed in both places in the fifth century with the Jerusalem basilica designated as "the place where Mary was born."

Mary's birth is celebrated by most of the historic Churches on September 8 (Copts and Ethiopians observe it on May 9). The first mention of this feast is at the beginning of the sixth century when a new church, dedicated to St Ann, replaced the basilica at the Shepherds' Pool. The present Church of St Ann, constructed by Crusaders in the twelfth century, occupies this site today. A shrine in the church's crypt commemorates the conception and birth of Mary.

### **Our Celebration of This Feast**

The principal theme of our feast is that "Today grace begins to bear fruit, showing forth to the world the Mother of God, through whom earth is united to Heaven for the salvation of our souls" (vespers).

Other than the names of Mary's parents, almost none of the narrative details from the Protoevangelium find their way into the hymns of this feast. Rather the focus of our prayer is that now the mystery of our salvation in Christ is beginning to unfold. "Today the barren gates are opened and the virgin, the Gate of God, comes forth... Today ends our nature's barrenness" (Orthros). Mary will become the one through whom the ancient prophecies will be fulfilled when Christ is incarnate in her. As St Andrew of Crete (650-740) expressed it: "Today's solemnity is a line of demarcation, separating the truth from its prefigurative symbol, and ushering in the new in place of the old... This day is for us the beginning of all holy days. It is the door to kindness and truth. Today an inspired Temple is provided for the Creator of all, and creation prepares itself to become the divine dwelling place of its Creator."

Andrew's contemporary, St John of Damascus (676-749) says, "The day of the Nativity of the Theotokos is the feast of joy for the whole world, because through the Theotokos the entire human race was renewed and the grief of the first mother Eve was changed into joy."

## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

**Today +Bishop John Adel Elya** (40 day). Requested by family of Annie & Salim Abraham - **The Joseph and Nejaimey families**, living and deceased.  
Requested by the Joseph Family

**September 22 +Mary and Habib Rahal, Bertha** (35 yr) & **William** (20 yr) **Rahall, Rahall & Reeks Families**. Requested by Nick Rahall & Family. Coffee Hour sponsored by Nick Rahall and Family.

**October 6 +Catherine Delnore** (40 Day). Requested by her family. Coffee Hour sponsored by the Family.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◆ We welcome the newly illumined **Emma Laurence Aulo** who received the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Chrismation, & Eucharist) on September 1. Mabrouk to Laurance, Saimon, Emmanuel, and the entire family!
- ◆ Last Week's Attendance/Donations: **28/\$1,572**
- ◆ The feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross is September 14. We will celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the feast on **Friday, September 13 at 7PM.**
- ◆ Our annual Parish Picnic is today from **Noon to 5PM.** Please plan to spend some time on the church grounds and partake of the wonderful food and fellowship! It is not too late to volunteer to help. We especially need runners, people to clean tables, and breaking down tables and chairs. Any help would be greatly appreciated. Please see Ginny Mischitelli if you can spend an hour or so volunteering.
- ◆ **Clean-up Day** - We are planning a Parish Clean-Up Day on Saturday **September 28** from 9AM till Noon (weather permitting.) We'll do some sprucing up inside and outside the church. Bring your rakes, etc. Pizza and soda will be served.
- ◆ You should have received a mailing that included a Contact Form. Please return the form in person, via regular mail, or email. Having an up to date contact list makes it easier for Fr. Bryan to reach out to the Community. If you did not receive the contact form, please see Fr. Bryan and he will give one to you.

Welcome to those who are visiting today. We are happy to have you worship with us. **If this is your first time here, please come downstairs to the Hall, introduce yourself, have some refreshments, and get to know the Community. If you have any questions about the Melkite Church and its traditions, please don't hesitate to ask Fr. Bryan.**

**Weddings** — One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

**Baptisms** — One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

**Please let Fr. Bryan know about anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis.**

If you or your children have graduated from high school, college, or a post secondary program, please let Fr. Bryan know. He would like to include their names in the bulletin to acknowledge their accomplishments. He would like to do this in September. Notice may be sent to [olphmelkite@gmail.com](mailto:olphmelkite@gmail.com) or by calling (978) 314-1962. Better yet, come and see Fr. Bryan after the Divine Liturgy.

## **Bishop Nicholas' 30th Anniversary Celebration**

On Thursday, **October 3rd**, Our Lady of Annunciation Cathedral will host a celebration in honor of Sayinda Nicholas' 30th Anniversary of episcopal ordination, 50th Anniversary of priestly ordination, as well as his 75th Birthday. The Divine Liturgy will begin at 5:00pm followed by a banquet at 7:00pm. Tickets are \$50 per person and must be purchased in advance. **No tickets will be sold at the door.** Please see the flyer in the most recent edition of **Sophia** for more details. There are also copies of the flyer in the narthex of the church. The deadline to purchase tickets is **September 20, 2019.** It would be wonderful to have a strong representation from OLPH at the Liturgy and Banquet.

## *September 8 – Nativity of the Theotokos*

**SEPTEMBER 1** MARKS THE BEGINNING of the Byzantine Church Year. An important part of this annual cycle of feasts and fasts is the sequence of the Twelve Great Feasts which, together with the “Feast of Feasts,” Pascha, commemorates the major events in the life of Christ.

The first of the feasts in this annual cycle is observed on September 8, the Nativity of the Theotokos. Our “life of Christ,” then begins with the birth of His Mother, just as it concludes with the commemoration of her Dormition. “This day is for us the beginning of all holy days” (St. Andrew of Crete) because the birth of Mary is the overture to the coming of Christ. The Church Year thereby affirms that one cannot glorify Christ apart from His Mother nor can we honor the Theotokos apart from her Son.

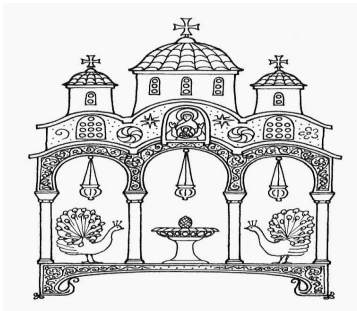
This connection is made clear in the troparion of the feast, which moves quickly from honoring Mary to proclaiming Christ: “Your Nativity, O Mother of God, heralded joy to the whole universe, for from you rose the Sun of Justice, Christ our God. Taking away the curse, He imparted the blessings, and by abolishing Death, He gave us everlasting life.”

### **The Source of Our Celebrations**

The Gospels do not record anything about the Holy Virgin prior to the Annunciation. The account of her birth on which our feast is based is found in the *Protoevangelium of James*, a second-century collection of “infancy narratives,” stories describing the births of Jesus and Mary. The first part - which early manuscripts call *The Story of the Birth of Saint Mary, Mother of God* - describes her nativity and her dedication to the temple, an event which we also celebrate in our Church Year (November 21).

Written in Greek, the Protoevangelium was translated into a number of languages and was known throughout the early Christian world. In the early third century, the Alexandrian scholar Origen referred to it as a dubious and recent composition, despite its claim to have been written by James, the brother of the Lord. Today it is thought that the Protoevangelium contains a mixture of apostolic traditions coming down from the first Christians along with narrative embellishments to “fill in the blanks” in the stories of the Lord and His Mother.

This desire to shed light on the hidden lives of Christ and His Mother is especially evident in another work popular in the first millennium, known as *The Book of the Nativity of Mary and the Childhood of the Savior* or the *Infancy Gospel of Matthew*. It combines the story of Mary from the Protoevangelium and apocryphal stories of Jesus from the second-century *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*.



### **Prokimenon**

**Reader:** O Lord save Your people and bless Your inheritance!

**People:** O Lord save Your people and bless Your inheritance!.

**Reader:** To You, O Lord, I have called: O my Rock, be not deaf to me!

**People:** O Lord save Your people and bless Your inheritance!

**Reader:** O Lord save Your people

**People:** And bless Your inheritance!

### **Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18**

#### **Alleluia Verses**

I have exalted one chosen out of my people. I have found David my servant and anointed him with holy chrism.

**Verse:** For my hand shall support him, and my arm shall make him strong.

### **Gospel: John 3:13-17**

#### **Kiss of Peace (Pg. 23)**

**Priest:** Christ is among us!

**People:** He is and always will be!

**Then offer the kiss of peace to the person on your right and left using the greeting above.**

**Hirmos (Tone 8)** - Mothers cannot be virgins, nor virgins mothers, and yet in you, O Mother of God, both virginity and motherhood were present and fulfilled: wherefore all the peoples of the earth proclaim you blessed.

