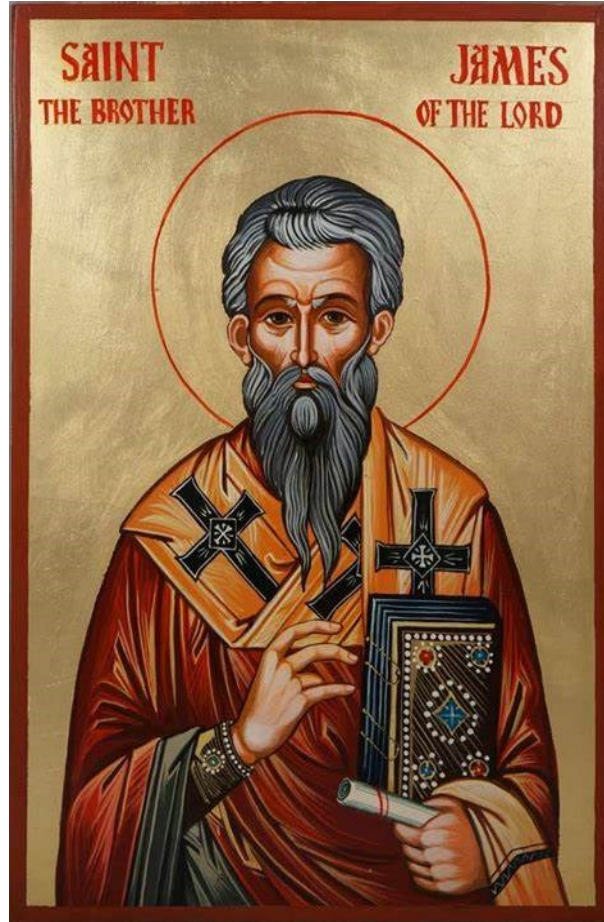


From the Divine Office for the Sunday after Nativity

Let us celebrate the memory of David the prophet and noble king, and that of James the Apostle, the first bishop of Zion. Being saved from error by their teachings, let us glorify Christ our God who was incarnate of the Virgin for the salvation of our souls. (Vespers)

Today David the holy one is filled with joy. Joseph and James offer their hymns of praise, for the crown of glory of their relationship with Christ fills them with joy. They offer their hymns of praise to the One born on earth in a manner beyond description, and they cry out: "O Merciful One, save those who honor You!" (Kontakion)



**Sunday After the Nativity of our Lord
Sunday Before Theophany
December 31**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
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Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Feast)

1. The Lord has said to my Lord: Sit at my right until I make of Your enemies a footstool.

O Son of God, who were born of the Virgin, save us who sing to you Alleluia!

2. The Lord shall send You from Zion a scepter of power: be the master in the midst of Your enemies.

Khallisna YabnAllah, ya man wulida min al Batul, nahnulmuraneemeena Laka.

Haleloueya!

3. With You was the beginning, on the day of Your might in the splendor of the holy ones.

O Son of God, who were born of the Virgin, save us who sing to you Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Before the Morning Star I have begotten You, the Lord has sworn and He will not repent: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

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

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 6) pg. 41

The angelic powers were around Your tomb, and the guards became as dead, and Mary stood at the tomb, seeking Your spotless body; Then You despoiled Hades without being tried by it, and You met the Virgin O Bestower of life. O Lord, who rose from the dead, glory to You!

Troparion of the Nativity (Tone 4)

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has shed the light of knowledge upon the world. Through it, those who had been star-worshippers learned through a star to worship You, O Sun of Justice, and to recognize in You the One Who rises and Who comes from on high. O Lord glory to You!

Troparion of Holy Joseph (Tone 2)

O Joseph, proclaim to David, the ancestor of Christ our God, the great miracles you have witnessed: you have seen the Virgin with child, given praise with the shepherds, adored with the wise men, and an angel of the Lord has appeared to you. Intercede with Christ God that He may save our souls.

Kontakion 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 as a new Child, being God from all eternity.

Some of the early alternative gospels taught that:

- Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary and Panthera, a Roman soldier (the Talmud); - Jesus was born as man and later adopted as a “son of God”

- Jesus was not fully man: he had a human body and a divine mind; - Jesus was created by God the Father and not equal to Him (Arianism);

- Jesus’ physical body was only an illusion, therefore He did not die on the cross; - Jesus’ human nature was overwhelmed by His divine nature (Eutychianism); Jesus had two natures but only one will, the divine, therefore His humanity was incomplete (monothelism);

-Jesus only seemed to die on the cross; instead God took Him to Himself (Islam)

The first centuries also saw the rise of teachings that denied:

-The value of the Old Testament (Marcionism);

-The value of marriage (Montanism); - The true brokenness of our human nature (Pelagianism).

- The value of icons (iconoclasm);

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the rise of groups with their own alternative gospels which teach that:

-God is the physical father of Jesus. They are “one God” only in that they are united in spirit, mind and purpose (Mormons);

- Jesus is the incarnation of Michael the Archangel, God’s first creation. He became Messiah only at His baptism (Jehovah’s Witnesses);

-Jesus was one of the many good spiritual teachers like Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius and others who attained divinity (New Age groups).

All of these tendencies we call heresies, from the Greek word heteran (other), as in “another gospel.” These heresies spoke about God and Christ but not in ways deemed consistent with the Scriptures. They came from another source than divine revelation and ultimately were rejected by the Church. Bishops, gathered in councils, divided what they saw as true from false teachings and rejected the early heresies. Their summary of the true Gospel, the Nicene Creed, remains the unique statement of our common faith.

Our Dogmatic Hymns

For centuries the Eastern Churches have also used liturgical hymns to assert their teaching in the face of heresies. The following sticheron from the vespers of the Nativity proclaims the Gospel faith of the Church with clarity and thereby refutes many of the heresies mentioned above. St. Paul would have approved.

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us proclaim the present mystery by which the partition has been broken and the flaming sword withheld: now shall the Cherubim let us all come to the Tree of Life. As for me, I am returning to the bliss of Paradise whence I had been driven by the original disobedience. Behold, the Image of the Father and His immutable Eternity has taken the form of a servant! He has come down to us from a Mother all-pure, and yet He has remained unchanged: He has remained true God as He was before, and has taken on Himself what He had not been, becoming Man out of His love for man. Wherefore, let us raise our voices in hymns and sing: “O God who was born of the Virgin, O our God, have mercy on us!”

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Carol May (French) McStay. Requested by Eli Francis
Jan 7 Members of the Daou & Kahale Families living and deceased. Requested by Houda Daou

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Eli Francis
 Next week's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Houda Daou

Please remember in your prayers: Lorraine Lian, George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Tom Sarrouf, Sandra Hanlan, Melissa Kalpakgian, Susan Bailey, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in the Middle East.
 If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$1,046
Coffee Hr.	\$ 20
Candles	\$ 34
Xmas Flowers	\$ 150
Xmas Offering	\$ 790
TOTAL	\$2,040

Christmas Offerings

Christmas Liturgies	\$ 755
Mailed In, etc.	\$1,240
Total	\$1,995

Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.
Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.

Theophany Liturgical Schedule

Fri 1/5, 6PM - Great Vespers for the Feast of Theophany
Sat 1/6, 10AM - Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Theophany followed by the Great Blessing of Water

There is no fasting until the Paramony of Theophany (Jan. 5)



AT EVERY DIVINE LITURGY the celebrant prays for the Church hierarchs in words such as these: “Graciously bestow them to Your holy Churches in peace, honor, safety health, long life, rightly dispensing the word of Your truth.” This last phrase is actually taken from St. Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy: *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim 2:15).

When the verse is translated as “dispensing” or “imparting” the word of Your truth, it suggest the act of passing on the Gospel from the bishop to His Church. When the translation “rightly dividing the word of truth” is used, something more is suggested. The bishop’s role is to separate the ideas circulating as “Gospel” into true and false, dividing one from the other. Anyone can say that their interpretation is faithful to the Tradition. It is the bishop’s role, St Paul tells Timothy, to make a judgment and separate true from false teaching.

St Paul spent his life proclaiming Christ despite all kinds of hardships. He was indignant that others were proclaiming false teachings and attributing them to Christ and His Church. He wrote to the Galatians, *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel – which is not another – but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed”* (Gal 1:6-8). These “other gospels,” which were no authentic gospel at all, were generally doctrines or practices from other traditions which some teachers were intermingling with the Gospel of Christ. The one St Paul found himself opposing most vigorously was that believers in Christ were required to be circumcised. People had to physically become Jews, its practitioners, taught, in order to unite to Christ. St Paul had cleared his teaching with the chief Apostles (see Gal 1:18-19) but his opponents continued in their views until the Jerusalem Church, led by St. James, the “brother of God” as he is called, confirmed that circumcision was not necessary, only faith in Christ (see Acts 15:6-21). The Apostolic Church had rightly divided the word of truth, determining what was essential and what was not.

What Was Paul’s Gospel?

The Gospel which Christ had preached was simple, according to the Evangelists. *“The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel”* (Mk 1:15).

Paul’s summary of the Gospel which he preached in 1Cor 15:3-8 tells us how he understood the kingdom of God to be at hand. *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”* It was in the death and resurrection of Christ that the kingdom of God was to be found.

Perversions of the Gospel

St. Paul did not hesitate to say that the promoters of circumcision in the Church were perverting the Gospel. Over the centuries a number of alternatives to the Gospel emerged: teachings which St Paul would surely have called “another gospel.” Some of the following first millennium teachings about Christ were quickly discarded; others have been revived over the years by different sects.

Instead of Trisagion: All of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Alleluia!

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: 2 Tim. 4:5-8

Alleluia Verses

May God have mercy on us and bless us.

Verse: May He let His face shine upon us and have mercy on us.

Gospel: Mk. 1:1-8, Sunday Before the Theophany

Hirmos of the Nativity (Tone 1)

O my soul, magnify the one who is more honorable and glorious than the heavenly powers!
Behold a strange and wonderful mystery: the cave is heaven, the Virgin a Cherubic throne, and the manger a noble place where reposes Christ our God. Let us praise and magnify Him!

Kinonikon: The Lord has sent redemption to His people. Alleluia!

After Communion: Troparion of the Nativity