



OUR LADY OF THE CEDARS CHURCH

A MELKITE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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REV. THOMAS P. STEINMETZ, Pastor

RT. REV. ANDRE ST. GERMAIN (retired)

REV. ROGER BOUCHER - Weekend Ministry

REV. THEOPHAN LEONARCZYK, Eparchial Chancellor

"Enter the Church and repent ... for here is the physician, not the judge. Here one is not investigated, one receives remission of sins." (St. John Chrysostom)



***Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!***



December 25, 2016

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Parish Advisory & Finance Council:

KEN MONTY (PRESIDENT), RICHARD ASHOOH, ROBERT ANDERSON, ROBIN ANDERSON, JOHN CULLEN, MARTHA DAGHER, TIM ERMATINGER, KEN KOMISAREK, MARYLOU LAZOS, PAUL MANSUR, NAJWA MOUSSOBA, JOE NEHME, MOE PARE, PAUL ST. GERMAIN, AND CHRISTELLE SLAYBE

Parish Secretary: ROBIN ANDERSON

Cedars Society President: MARYLOU LAZOS

Sunday School Coordinator: MARTHA DAGHER

N.A.M.Y. Advisor: ROBIN ANDERSON

HOLY MYSTERY OF CONFESSION: Before or after any service, or by appointment;

HOLY MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN ILLUMINATION: Please contact the clergy in advance to arrange for the required baptismal instructions;

HOLY MYSTERY OF CROWNING: At least six months prior to the proposed wedding, please contact the clergy to arrange for the required interview and instructions;

HOLY MYSTERY OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK: Please contact the pastor at any time when this sacrament is needed;

HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK: Anyone too infirm to attend our services may receive Communion in the home. Please advise the clergy whenever this sacrament is needed.

THE ORDER OF TODAY'S LITURGY

The Troparion of the Nativity of Christ (Fourth Tone)

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 recognize in You the One who rises from on high. O Lord, glory to You!

The Kontakon of the Nativity of the Christ (Third Tone)

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent in Essence, and the earth presents a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels and the shepherds sing His glory, while the wise men with the Star travel on their way. For to us is born a new child who is God from all eternity.

THE PROKIMENON:

LET ALL ON EARTH WORSHIP AND SING PRAISE TO YOU,
SING PRAISE TO YOUR NAME.

Shout joyfully to God, all you on earth, Sing praise to the glory of His Name.

Today's Readings: Hebrews 11: 9-10, 32-40 and Matthew 1: 1-25

LITURGY INTENTIONS

Saturday. 7:30 PM:

For all of our parish, and for our friends, relatives,
and loved ones, living and departed

Sunday, 11:00 AM:

For all of our parish, and for our friends, relatives,
and loved ones, living and departed

Next Saturday (Dec. 31), 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Adma Solomon (13th), Louise Samara (28th),
Frederick Solomon (14th), Margaret Marpes (39th),
Eva Abood (26th) and George Abood (45th)

Next Sunday (Jan. 1) 11:00 AM:

For the repose of Ethel Steinmetz (22nd Anniversary),
by her son Fr. Tom and Family



Christ is born: Glorify Him!
Christ comes from heaven:
Go out to meet Him.
Christ descends to earth:
Let us be raised on high.

-St. Gregory of Nazianzus

Can you give a Christmas gift to help support your parish?

I am asking that each family prayerfully consider making a gift of \$100 to the church between now and Jan. 6. If you cannot afford a gift of \$100, then I ask you to give according to your means. If you can afford more than \$100, then I ask you to please be more generous.

When you make out your check to Our Lady of the Cedars Church please write: "Parish Christmas Gift" in the memo of the check. You may mail the check to the church or include it in the Sunday collection. Our goal is to raise \$17,000. So far we have raised \$8,500! Thank you for your generosity.

- Fr. Tom



Our parish has an App!

The new parish app can be downloaded at the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store! If you have a smart phone or tablet, this app will keep you up to date on things going on in the church, send you reminders, allow you post things, and to chat with one another. Just search for "Our Lady of the Cedars Church," download the app, and keep up with what is going on!

The 2017 offering envelopes are available in the back of the church. Please bring them home with you. If you are not currently receiving envelopes and would like envelopes for 2017, please tell Father Tom.

Electronic Giving is Available!



ELECTRONIC GIVING

Are you tired of check writing? Do you wish to support your parish regularly, even if you can't be here? Electronic giving may be for you. Go to parishpay.com, search for Our Lady of the Cedars Church, and set up your account. You can set your account for regular giving - weekly, monthly, or whatever schedule you would like. Just set it and forget it!

Donations can also be made through the parish app, or through automatic bill pay with your bank.

2017 Calendars are available in the back of the church. One per family, please, until we make sure that everyone gets one!

Attendance Last Week: Saturday 4:30 PM: 9 Sunday 11:00 AM: 63

Last Weekend's Collection: \$ 1,055.⁰⁰

The average Sunday envelope donation: \$38.³²

The balance remaining on our mortgage is: \$ 79,589.⁶⁴

SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

Wed., Dec. 28	7:00 PM	Vespers
Sat. Dec. 31	4:30 PM	Divine Liturgy: The Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord
Sun., Jan. 1	11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy: The Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord

The Fathers Speak.....*On the meaning of Christmas:*

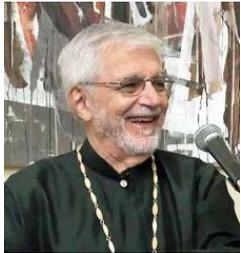
What shall I say? And how shall I describe this birth to you? The Eternal One has become an infant. He who sits upon the sublime and heavenly throne now lies in the manger. For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His word, taking my form He gives me His spirit, and so, He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares me for the treasure of life. He takes my form to sanctify me. He gives me His spirit, that he may save me.

-St. John Chrysostom

Our Savior, dearly beloved, was born today. Let us rejoice; for on the Birthday of Life, sorrow can have no place. That day hath swallowed up the fear of death, and by the promise of eternity elevates our joy. No one is excluded from a participation in this gladness; and we have a common ground of rejoicing, in that Our Lord, the destroyer of sin and death, finding no man free from guilt, hath come to work a universal redemption. Let the saint rejoice, for he approaches his reward; let the sinner be glad, for he is invited to forgiveness; let the Gentile take courage, for he is called to life.

-St. Leo the Great

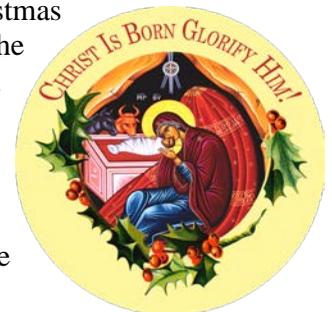
The Bishop's Appeal: Help us reach our goal!



We thank God for tremendous gift of His Only-begotten Son, and we offer thanks to our new-born King for all the blessings received in 2016. Please make a generous thanksgiving gift to your Melkite Catholic Church in America. The annual Bishop's Appeal officially ends in all the parishes of the Eparchy on 31 December 2009. **However, gifts to the Appeal will continue to be received and credited to your parish until 31 January 2010 for anyone who makes an end-of-year, tax-deductible donation.** Your gift means so much to so many! Thank you for your generosity. May God bless you and all your family with a blessed and merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and holy New Year! **CHRIST IS BORN!**

REMEMBER THE MELKITE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL: Give a lasting gift for future generations of Melkites in America by remembering the Melkite Catholic Church in your will. Simply add the following statement to your last will and testament: ***I hereby bequeath to the Melkite Eparchy of Newton the following sum: \$_____.*** Contact Bishop Nicholas personally to inform him of your generous bequest: 3 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

In the Gospel, we see that Jesus was given to us as the first "Christmas Gift" by God the Father – but it was only made available through the cooperation and collaboration of a whole series of human beings who in faith were open to His work and plan. In the epistle, we are reminded of the same thing, and told that people must work in faith without necessarily seeing the results – but trusting that God's Gift will ultimately be given to all of us, and that we all become part of one another's salvation. We need priests to continue working in faith to help people receive and benefit from the great Gift. Pray for an increase of vocations.



The meaning of the icon of the Nativity

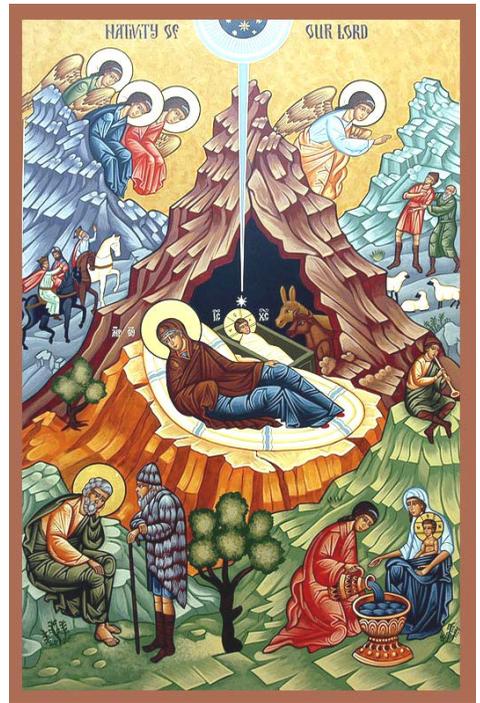
On this icon, the whole Gospel message of the birth of our Savior from the Virgin Mary is depicted, along with other details added from the holy Tradition. On many icons of the Nativity, there are a multitude of details, on other less. Let us look at the major elements.

The focus of the icon, of course, is on the birth of our Lord from His most pure virgin mother Mary; She is shown larger than any of the other figures, reclining on a mat, and looking not at her new-born Son, but rather with love and compassion towards her spouse, St Joseph the Betrothed, seeing his affliction and bewilderment over this most strange and divine birth. He is shown in the left bottom corner, conversing with Satan, disguised as an old shepherd. The posture of St Joseph is one of doubt and inner trouble, for he wondered if it might be possible that the conception and birth were not by some secret human union.

The back-drop for the manger is a dark cave, which immediately reminds us of the cave in which our Lord was buried 33 years later, wrapped in a shroud. In the cave are an ox and donkey, details not mentioned by the Gospels, but which are an invariable feature of every icon of the Nativity; the scene is included to show the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Isaiah, “the ox knows his Owner, and the donkey his Master's crib, but Israel does not know Me, and the people has not regarded Me” (*Isaiah 1:3*). Above this central composition, in the very center of the icon is the wondrous star coming from heaven, which led the magi to the place where our Savior lay. The holy angels are seen both glorifying God and bringing the good tidings of the Lord's birth to the shepherds. The fact that Jewish shepherds and heathen magi were among the first to worship our Lord shows us the universality of this great event, meant for the salvation of all mankind.

The final detail of this icon, the scene of the washing of the Lord (lower right) is an element that has caused some controversy over the ages. In some churches of the holy monasteries of Mount Athos, the scene in the frescoes has been deliberately obliterated and replaced with bushes or shepherds; there was a prevailing opinion that this scene was degrading to Christ, who had no need of washing, being born in a miraculous manner from a pure virgin. But we retain this image on our icons, being part of the holy tradition passed on to us; truly it does not degrade the Lord, but magnifies Him, as is evident in the prayer that is appointed to be read at the time of Baptism for the midwife of a child: “O Master, Lord our God...Who laid in a manger and blessed the midwife Salome* who came to believe in an honourable virginity...” Who, more effectively than a midwife, could testify to the divine and virginal birth? Therefore we do well to understand the importance of this blessed scene.

Finally, as we look at the icon as one united composition, we can only be filled with joy, not only because of the bright colors and the festive activity depicted thereon, but for the joyous news of our salvation so clearly proclaimed by it. In it, all creation is rejoicing at the birth of our Lord: the heavens (a star and angels); the earth (the mountains, plants and animals); and especially mankind, represented most perfectly in the figure of the new Eve, the most pure Mother of God.



“In thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light.”

IN 1868 REV PHILIPS BROOKS, rector of an Episcopal church in Philadelphia, wrote “O Little Town of Bethlehem” for his Sunday School. He had visited the Holy Land a few years earlier and he wanted to share something of that trip with his young parishioners. Could he have imagined that people would still be singing that simple tune today?



Rev Brooks was far from the first person to be intrigued by Bethlehem, an insignificant place by worldly standards but one of lasting religious importance to both Jews and Christians. First settled by the Canaanites over 1400 years before Christ, the town was called the “house of Lahama,” a local fertility god. When the Israelites conquered the town during the first millennium BC they reinterpreted the name to mean “house of bread” (*beyt lehem*). Arab Palestinians, the local population today, call it the “house of meat” (*beyt laham*).

Bethlehem in the Old Testament

The first mention of Bethlehem in the Bible is in the Book of Genesis: “*So Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrath that is, Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day*” (Gen 35:19, 20). Ephrath is a Hebrew word for “fertility,” recalling the old Canaanite meaning of the name. The two names are often placed side by side in the Old Testament.

Jews consider Rachel’s grave as one of their holiest sites. It is also revered by Christians and Muslims. The pillar marking the burial place of Rachel was replaced during the Ottoman era by a tomb-like shrine which remains as a place of pilgrimage today. Rachel’s connection with Bethlehem is noted in St Matthew’s Gospel. Quoting Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew describes the mourning for the Holy Innocents as “*Rachel weeping for her children*” (Mt 2:18).

Home of Jesse, Father of David

The town is next described as the home of Jesse, the father of David, Israel’s future king. The Prophet Samuel was sent there by God to identify the next king of Israel: “*Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons*” (1 Sm 16:1). Jesse brought his sons before Samuel and when the prophet meets David, the youngest son, *the LORD said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward*” (1 Sm 16:12-13).

David became an attendant to the current king, Saul. He was present when the Philistine warrior, Goliath, challenges the Israelites to send out a champion to face him. David volunteered and slew Goliath with his slingshot. Saul named David the commander of his troops but David’s

growing popularity eventually turned Saul against him. It was only after Saul was killed by the Philistines that the leading men chose David as their king.

The highpoint of David's victorious reign was the capture of what would be his capital, Jerusalem, which would be then known as the city of David. The actual site of David's city, to the southeast of the present Old City of Jerusalem, has been excavated since the nineteenth century.

Bethlehem, City of David?

While Jerusalem is repeatedly called the City of David in the Old Testament, St Luke's Gospel is the only place in the Scriptures where Bethlehem is given that distinction. We are told that "*Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David...*" (Lk 2:4). Why does Luke identify Bethlehem in this way?

Luke gives Bethlehem, the city of David's birth, the royal title proper to Jerusalem to accentuate the paradox that, despite Jesus' humble origins, His is a royal birth. St Matthew does the same thing when he quotes the following prophecy of Micah: "*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting*" (Mi 5:2).

When St Luke uses the title "City of David" for Bethlehem he makes an unspoken comparison between Christ and His ancestor in the flesh. David was born a man of the soil and was later chosen to be king. Jesus was an eternal King who took upon Himself the humble circumstances of being born in a cave and laid in a manger. David was a shepherd who became a king. Jesus is a King, worshipped by the shepherds, David's successors. While David transcended his lowly birth, Jesus transformed His, making it the object of our songs.

The Basilica of the Nativity

One of the most important churches which the empress St Helena commissioned during her trip to the Holy Land in the early fourth century is the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The site on which it was built had been revered for years by people in the area, as Origen attests: "If anyone wants further proof to convince him that Jesus was born in Bethlehem besides the prophecy of Micah and the story recorded in the Gospels by Jesus' disciples, he may observe that, in agreement with the story in the Gospel about His birth, the cave in Bethlehem where He was born is pointed out, with the manger in the cave where He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. What is shown there is famous in these parts, even among people alien to the faith, that indeed Jesus, who is worshipped and revered by the Christians, was born in this cave" (*Contra Celsum*, book I, chapter LI).

The church soon became one of the chief shrines in the Holy Land and a favorite destination of pilgrims. The church built by St Helena – a rotunda overlooking the cave with an attached nave and atrium – was destroyed in the sixth century during a Samaritan rebellion against Roman rule. It was rebuilt by Emperor Justinian in 565 in the form which remains to this day: a Greek basilica-style church built over the underground Grotto of the Nativity, the shrine marking the traditional place of Christ's birth. A silver star under the altar, supposedly marking the "exact spot" where Christ was born, was added by the French in the eighteenth century.

Please remember to pray for the health and protection of Genevieve Allen, Olivia Aragon, Elizabeth Ashooh, Elsie Ashooh, Al Auclair, Alice Auclair, Erin Baroody, Michael Baroody, Anthony Blando, Helena Burkush, Fr. Michael Carl, Danielle Caron, Michael Cavanaugh, Meghan Connors, Sarah Cullen, Theresa Cullen, Sher Farrow, Declan Finn, Janet Drake, Julie Fregeau, Mary Fregeau, Peter Fregeau, Christine Freitas, John Gallagher, Loretto Gauvin, Bonnie Gomez, Gail Fisher, Nick Haddad, Lucille Harper, Laura Jorba, Virginia Kearney, Shirley Lanoue, Susan Latvis, Diana Lebel, Peggy Lecler, Fr. Theophan Leonarczyk, Sadie Grace McCallum, Miriam McCallum, Susan Merrill, Alfred Nasr, Afef Nasr, Blaise Notter, Steve Notter, Steven O'Leary, Denis O'Keefe, Ellen Osgood, Josephine Paquette, Sheila Quinn, Deborah Roberts, Adam Rubin, Fr. Andre St. Germain, Kara Salvas, Denise Sherburne, Tarrant Smith, Mary Stephen, Catherine Waldron, and Iris Angelina Velasquez.

If you are visiting our church, our parish family is delighted to welcome you here! Please give us the chance to get to know you by joining us for some coffee, pastry, and conversation in the church hall following the Divine Liturgy. If you would like to know more about the Melkite Catholic Church, check out the brochure entitled *"Welcome to this Holy House,"* located on the table in the back of the church.



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