



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 31, 2017

**The Commemoration of the Holy and Just Joseph, Spouse of the Theotokos,
of James, the Brother of the Lord, of David, Prophet and King,
and of the Holy Proto-Martyr Stephen**

The Leave-Taking of the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord

THE SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY

Parish Advisory & Finance Council:

KEN MONTY (PRESIDENT), ROBERT ANDERSON, ROBIN ANDERSON, JOHN CULLEN, MARTHA DAGHER, TIM ERMATINGER, KEN KOMISAREK, MARYLOU LAZOS, PAUL MANSUR, NAJWA MOUSSOBA, JOE NEHME, MAURICE 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;

THE ORDER OF TODAY'S LITURGY

The Troparion of the Resurrection (5th Tone) Page 52

The Troparion of the Nativity of the Lord (4th 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 Troparion of Joseph (2nd Tone)

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

The Troparion of the Dormition of the Theotokos (1st Tone): Page 16

The Kontakon of the Nativity of the Lord (3rd Tone)

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent in Essence, and the earth presents a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels with the shepherds sing His glory and 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:

O LORD, SAVE YOUR PEOPLE AND BLESS YOUR INHERITANCE!

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

Today's Readings: 2 Timothy 4: 5-8 and Mark 1: 1-8

LITURGY INTENTIONS

Saturday, (December 30) 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Louise Samara (29th), Frederick Solomon (15th), Margaret Marpes (40th), Eva Abood (27th), and George Abood (46th)

Sunday, (December 31) 11:00 AM

For the repose of Ethel Steinmetz (23rd Anniversary)
by her son Fr. Tom, and Family

Next Saturday, (January 6) 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Susan Atalla (45th), Zahia Elias (33rd), Leo Elias (11th), Sam Elias (67th), Cassie Gallagher (36th), Ernest Baroody (44th), Mary Noufel (36th), Mariam Haddad (36th), and John Fawaz (63rd)

Next Sunday, (January 7) 11:00 AM

For the repose of Abraham Dagher (17th Anniversary),
by his parents Jamil and Rosemonde Dagher and Family



JANUARY 6: THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY

Theophany (a Greek word meaning "Manifestation of God") is one of the great feasts of the liturgical year. It is a celebration not only of God's manifestation as Holy Trinity, but also of His mercy and compassion expressed in the Person of Jesus who became man for our sake in order to open the gates of salvation to all people.

This Feast will be commemorated with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water on Friday evening at 7:00 PM.

"The true light has appeared and it gives illumination to all. Christ is baptized with us, He who is the purest of all, supernatural; He sanctifies the water, and this becomes a purification for our souls." (from the Office of Lauds).

It is traditional for the parish priest to visit the homes of his parishioners during the coming weeks, and to bless the homes with this sacred water. If you would like Father Tom to bless your home, please notify him by leaving a message in the collection basket, or by leaving a phone message at the rectory.



Sunday School will resume next Sunday, January 7, at 10 AM.

The Feasts of the Circumcision of the Lord and of St. Basil the Great

These feasts will be commemorated with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil on New Year's Day at 11:00 am.

2018 Calendars are available in the back of the church.

Attendance - Last Sat. 4:30 PM: 16 Last Sun. 11:00 AM: 68

Christmas Eve: 194 Christmas Morning: 14

Last Weekend's Collection: \$ \$1,098.⁰⁰ Christmas: \$5,995.⁰⁰

The average Sunday envelope donation: \$36.⁵⁵

The balance remaining on our mortgage is: \$76,504.³²

SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

Mon. Jan. 1	11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy: The Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord
Wed., Jan 3	7:00 PM	Divine Liturgy: Offered for the persecuted Christians of the Middle East and the world
Fri., Jan 5	7:00 PM	Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water for Theophany
Sat., Jan.6	4:30 PM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday after Theophany
Sun., Jan. 7	10:15 AM	Sunday Orthros
Sun., Jan. 7	11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday after Theophany

An Explanation 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.

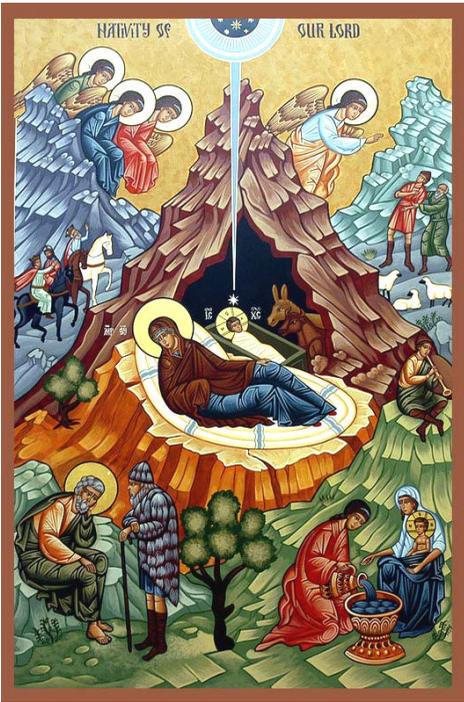
The focus of the icon, of course, is on the birth of our Lord from His most pure virgin mother Mary; She is shown larger than any of the other figures, reclining on a mat, and looking not at her new-born Son, but rather with love and compassion towards her spouse, St Joseph the Betrothed, seeing his 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) by the midwives 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, as some felt it was degrading to Christ to imply that he needed bathing after birth. But we retain this image on our icons, because it is part of the holy tradition passed on to us. Truly it is not degrading to the Lord, but magnifies Him, as it reminds us of the Divine Condescension of the Incarnation: God has become a real flesh and blood human, and begins His life as do all humans – as a helpless infant in need of care.

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.



The Fathers Speak.....

On the meaning of the Nativity of the Lord:

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 has 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, has 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



As this year draws to a close, we count all the "good gifts and perfect graces" which our Father in Heaven has bestowed upon us and upon those we love in 2017. And we commemorate today St. Joseph who was the provider and protector of the Holy Family in Nazareth. Be a protector and provider for our Melkite Eparchy in America by giving a generous **end-of-year tax-deductible gift to the Bishop's Appeal**. Your gift to the Appeal is essential for meeting the critical needs of our Melkite Church in America and for assuring its continued and future growth. And 10% of your gift supports our brethren who suffer persecution because of their faith. Know that our Father and Shepherd, Bishop Nicholas thanks you for your generous support and asks God's abundant blessings upon you and all your family in the New Year 2018.

REMEMBER THE MELKITE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL: Give a lasting gift for future generations of Melkites and help to ensure that our beautiful Melkite heritage continues to grow and flourish for your children's children. 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.

God in the Flesh at Bethlehem and the Jordan

The oldest practice documented in Christian history concerning Christ's Nativity was that of a single celebration of the manifestation of God in the world in Jesus Christ: it included the celebration of Christ's birth, the adoration of the Magi, all the events of Christ's childhood recorded in the Scriptures, as well as His baptism by John in the Jordan and His first miracle, at the wedding feast of Cana. St Cyril of Alexandria writes about it at the beginning of the third century.

In the next century, St Gregory the Theologian writing in the year 380, refers to this practice, still observed in his Church in Asia Minor: "Now if the feast of the Theophany, and so also of the Nativity, for it is called both, since two names are ascribed to one reality... The name is Theophany, since He has appeared, and Nativity, since He has been born" (Oration 38, *On the Theophany, or the Nativity of Christ* :3).

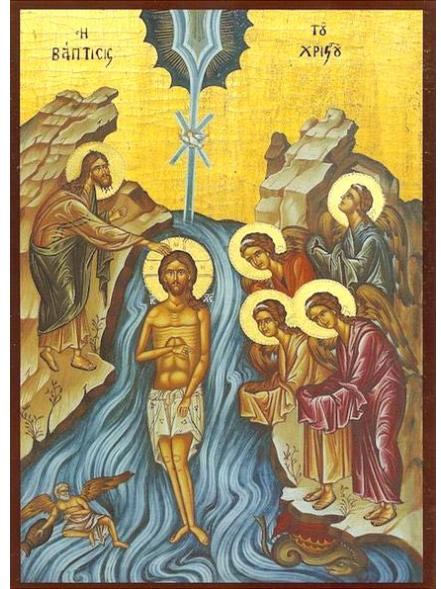
Scholars today believe that this single feast of the Manifestation of God was observed in the West as well, but on December 25. In both cases, the date was determined by the date believed to be the date of the crucifixion. In the ancient world it was commonly believed that the date of a great person's death coincided with the date of his conception or birth. Some rabbis still teach that a righteous person is entrusted with a mission on the day of his conception or birth. In one who completes his mission in the most perfect way possible, this perfection is expressed in the fact that his mission ends on the same day that it was begun.

In the East it was believed that April 6 was the date of Christ's conception and crucifixion; consequently, January 6 marked the celebration of His birth. In the West the corresponding dates were March 25 and December 25.

After the First Ecumenical Council in AD 325, Christians in East and West became more aware of the practices of one another's Churches. The East adopted the Roman date of December 25, dedicating it to the events of Christ's birth. According to St John Chrysostom this happened at Antioch in approximately 378. Preaching there in 388 on the Feast of the Nativity, he states that its observance was not yet quite ten years old. It quickly spread to the other Churches in the East. The East then devoted January 6 to the commemoration of His baptism.

The Synaxarion read at orthros on the feast of the Nativity notes that the day is devoted to all the events of Christ's birth: "On the twenty-fifth of this month we commemorate the nativity according to the flesh of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ... On this day we commemorate the veneration of the Magi... On this day we commemorate the shepherds who beheld the Lord." To this day we read Luke's story of Jesus' birth and the visitation to the shepherds at the evening Vesper-Liturgy and the story of the Magi from Matthew's Gospel at the morning Liturgy.

In the West, the division was slightly different, with January 6 dedicated to the visit of the Magi, as well as the baptism of Christ, as the following antiphon from vespers on the Roman feast of the



Epiphany shows: “We keep this day holy in honor of three miracles: this day a star led the Wise Men to the manger; this day water was turned into wine at the marriage feast; this day Christ chose to be baptized by John in the Jordan, for our salvation, alleluia.”

Manifestation to Israel

The original single feast of the Nativity-Theophany celebrated the first revelations of His divinity, His incarnation, and the beginning of His ministry as Lord and Savior of mankind. It put forth a number of themes which we now find spread out throughout the festal season.

On the feast of the Nativity (and of Christ’s circumcision, on January 1) we celebrate God becoming man in a particular place and time. Jesus is born in the heart of God’s chosen people, Israel, and He is adored by them in Mary and Joseph and the shepherds who came to the cave. These feasts celebrate the particular revelation of God to the nation of Israel in terms of its sacred history, as we proclaim in this verse from vespers:

“Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and celebrate all you lovers of Zion; for the temporal bonds with which Adam was condemned have been loosed; paradise hath been opened for us, and the serpent has been annihilated, having beheld now that the one deceived by her of old hath become a Mother to the Creator. O, the depth, richness, wisdom and knowledge of God, that the instrument of death which brought death to all flesh, has become the first-fruit of salvation to all the world, because of the Theotokos. The all-perfect God has been born from her as a babe; and by His birth He has sealed her virginity; by His swaddling clothes He has loosened the chains of our sins; and by His babyhood He has healed the pains and sorrows of Eve. Let all creation, therefore, exchange glad tidings and rejoice; for Christ has come to recall it and to save our souls.”

Manifestation to the Gentiles

Our vision of Christ’s coming work is widened as the Magi, pagan astrologers, arrive “from the East” to worship Him. The gifts they bring represent kingship (gold), priesthood (frankincense) and a self-emptying death (myrrh). In them Christ’s kingship over all nations is revealed. He is to be “*a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel*” (Lk 2:32).

“You have shone forth from the Virgin, O Christ, supersensual Sun of righteousness. And a star pointed to You, O uncontainable One, contained in a cave, and the Magi were led to worship You. Wherefore, with them, we magnify You. O Giver of life; glory to You!”

Manifestation to All Creation

On the feast of the Theophany another aspect of Christ’s incarnation is celebrated. His coming transforms, not only humanity, but all creation. In His baptism He sanctifies the waters, a primordial element of creation in Genesis, representing the ultimate transfiguration of all things in the Kingdom of God. As we hear at the great blessing of water on the feast of the Theophany, “Today land and sea divide between them the joy of the world, and the world is filled with rejoicing. The waters behold You, O Lord: the waters behold You and they fear. The Jordan turns back its course, and the mountains shout with glee as they behold God in the flesh.”

“Of old, the prince of this world was named king of all that was in the waters; but by Your baptism he is choked and destroyed, like Legion in the lake. With Your mighty arm, O Savior, You have granted freedom to Your creation, which he had enslaved”
(From Compline on the Fore-feast of the Theophany).

Today's Readings:

A reading from the 2nd Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy (4: 5-8) and)

My son Timothy be watchful in all things, bear with tribulation patiently, work as a preacher of the Good News, fulfill your ministry. As for me, I am already being poured out in sacrifice, and the time of my deliverance is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have completed the course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the just Judge, will give to me on that day: yet not to me only, but also to those who love his coming.

الرسالة (2 تيموثاوس 4 : 5-8)

يا ولدي تيموثاوس، تيقظ في كل شيء، احتمل المشقات، اعمل عمل المُبشِّر، أوفِ خدمتك. لأنني الآن أراقُ سكبياً، ووقتُ انحلالي قد حضر. قد جاهدتُ الجهادَ الحسن، أتممتُ سعيي، حفظتُ الايمان. انما يبقى اكليلُ البرِّ المحفوظ لي الذي سيَجزيهني به في ذلكَ اليومِ الربُّ الديانُ العادل، لا اِيَّاي فقط بل جميعَ الذين يحبون ظهوره أيضاً.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark (1: 1-8)

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, "*Behold, I send my messenger before you, who shall prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the desert, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make straight his paths,'*" there came John in the desert, baptizing and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea went out to him, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and all were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "One mightier than I is coming after me, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

الانجيل (مرقس 1 : 1-8)

بدءُ انجيل يسوع المسيح ابن الله، كما هو مكتوبُ في الانبياء: ها عنذا ارسلُ ملاكي امامَ وجهك يهيئُ طريقَكَ قدامَكَ. صوتُ صارخٍ في البرية: اعدوا طريقَ الربِّ، واجعلوا سبيلَهُ قويمَةً. كان يوحنا يُعمدُ في البرية ويكرزُ بمعمودية التوبة لغفران الخطايا. وكان يخرج اليه كلُّ اهل بلاد اليهودية وجميعُ سكان اورشليم، فيعتمدون منه جميعهم في نهر الاردن معترفين بخطاياهم. وكان لباس يوحنا من وبر الابل، وعلى حَقْوِيَّة منقطة من جلد، وكان طعامه الجراد وعسل البرِّ، وكان يكرزُ قائلاً: انه ياتي بعدي مَنْ هُو اقوى مني، وانا لستُ باهلٍ ان انحني وأحلَّ سيرَ حذائه. انا عمدتُكم بالماء، واما هو فسيعمدُكم بالروح القدس.

Please remember to pray for the health and protection of Genevieve Allen, Donna Andruskiewicz, Olivia Aragon, Paul Archambeault, Elizabeth Ashooh, Elsie Ashooh, Alice Auclair, Erin Baroody, Michael Baroody, Anthony Blando, Helena Burkush, Fr. Michael Carl, Danielle Caron, Michael Cavanaugh, Meghan Connors, Sarah Cullen, Theresa Cullen, Sarah Dagher, Bishop John Elya, Sher Farrow, Julie Fregeau, Mary Fregeau, Peter Fregeau, Christine Freitas, John Gallagher, Marguerite Ganem, Mary Ann Garvey, Loretto Gauvin, Bonnie Gomez, Gail Fisher, Laurice Haddad, Nick Haddad, Lucille Harper, Laura Jorba, Virginia Kearney, Eileen Kennedy, Leila Khoury, Shirley Lanoue, Susan Latvis, Diana Label, Haley Lesmerises, Sadie Grace McCallum, Miriam McCallum, Ramona Matias, Susan Merrill, Maria Moser, Joanne Nader, Alfred Nasr, Afef Nasr, Raymond Nehme, Samira Nehme, Steve Notter, Steven O'Leary, Ellen Osgood, Josephine Paquette, MaryJo Pond, Sheila Quinn, Susan Quintal, Deborah Roberts, Adam Rubin, Fr. Andre St. Germain, Kara Salvias, Raymond Sherburne, Tarrant Smith, Catherine Waldron, George Webber, Martha Webber, Marilyn Whitmore, 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.



  <p>Joe Ashooh, Agent 297 South Willow St Manchester, NH 03103 603-624-1000 www.joesthere.com</p> <p>Providing Insurance and Financial Services Call us for a free quote</p>	<p>NORTH HILLS REALTY GROUP, LLC <i>Residential Real Estate Brokers</i> Abraham Dagher, Realtor 814 Elm St., Suite # 302 Manchester, NH 03101 (603) 629-9988</p>	 <p>Chuck Stephen 814 Elm Street, Suite 503 Manchester, NH 03101 Tel # 603.606.3391 Toll Free 866.491.9675 chuck@glenwoodinvestment.com www.glenwoodinvestment.com</p> <p>Glenwood Investment Group <i>“Grow and protect your hard-earned wealth”</i></p>
<p>THE STEPHEN GROUP</p> <p>814 Elm Street, Suite 309 Manchester, NH 03101 Office 603.625.8825 Cell 603.419.9592</p> <p>JOHN STEPHEN <i>Managing Partner</i> jstephen@stephengroupinc.com www.stephengroupinc.com</p>		 <p>Stephen LAW GROUP P.L.C.</p> <p>Robert Stephen, Attorney at Law 582 Chestnut Street Manchester, NH 03104 phone 603-663-1007 www.StephenLaw.com</p>
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