

**:: Metropolitan JOSEPH's Pastoral Message ::
The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord 2015**

This is our festival, this is the feast we celebrate today, in which God comes to live with human beings, that we may journey toward God, or return—for to speak thus is more exact—that laying aside the old human being we may be clothed with the new, and that as in Adam we have died so we may live in Christ, born with Christ and crucified with Him, buried with Him, and rising with Him. For it is necessary for me to undergo the good turnaround, and as painful things came from more pleasant things, so out of painful things more pleasant things must return. "For where sin abounded, grace super-abounded," and if the taste of forbidden fruit condemned, how much more does the Passion of Christ justify? Therefore we celebrate the feast not like a pagan festival but in a godly manner, not in a worldly way but in a manner above the world. We celebrate not our own concerns but the One who is ours, or rather what concerns our Master, things pertaining not to sickness but to healing, not to the first shaping, but to the reshaping. (St. Gregory the Theologian – from the Festal Oration 38 on the Nativity of the Lord)

As we celebrate the Birth in the Flesh of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, the profound words of St. Gregory the Theologian which are quoted above stir in us feelings of great joy and hope because of the great condescension which God has deigned to show toward His children.

Throughout the entire history of mankind, God has called His children to return to Him after the fall of Adam and Eve. He has called us through the prophets, and all of the faithful and holy men and women who are the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ, down to John the Baptist. Today we celebrate the ultimate calling of God to His children which is the taking of flesh by God from a woman, the most Holy Theotokos, and the dwelling of God in the flesh on this earth among us. We are called to respond to this awesome and loving action from God with a dramatic change in our lives. We are called to make a change which causes us to love not the carnal and material things of this world, but to direct all of our love toward God and the eternal things of heaven. As St. Gregory says *"Therefore we celebrate the feast not like a pagan festival but in a Godly manner, not in a worldly way but in a manner above the world."*

As we spend precious time this season with family and friends, let us appreciate them as God's gift to us and focus on our love for them more than we focus on the material and commercial things which our secular culture embraces.

Let us be ever mindful, in the midst of the great joy of this Feast, of the suffering people around the world, especially in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and throughout the Middle East and other parts of the world, and offer our prayers that our Lord, The Prince of Peace, will bring to them the peace which can only come from above.

With great love for all of you we exclaim, Christ is born! Glorify Him!

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

**St. George Orthodox Church
of Spring Valley**

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Thursday, December 24, 2015

Christmas Eve: Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ
Royal Hours: 10:00 AM :: Vespers: 6:00 PM :: Divine Liturgy: 7:00 PM

Holy Bread: Wayne and Genie Sanders

This Sunday's Holy Bread/Coffee Hour (Dec. 27): OPEN

- *The following hymns and readings are for the 7:00 PM Divine Liturgy.*

Entrance Hymn for the Nativity (Psalm 109): From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent; Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Save us, O Son of God, who wast born of a Virgin; who sing to Thee: Alleluia.

Troparion for the Nativity (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars did learn therefrom to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest Thou didst come. O Lord, glory to Thee.

- *We do not sing the Troparion to St. George on this day.*

Kontakion for the Nativity (Tone 3): Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent in essence; the earth offereth the cave to the unapproachable One; the angels with the shepherds glorify Him; and the Magi with the star travel on their way; for a new child hath been born for our sakes, God before the ages.

St. George is a parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
The Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH
The Right Reverend Bishop ANTHONY, Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest
www.antiochian.org

In Place of the Trisagion Hymn

As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia. (3 times)

THE EPISTLE

Let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. Shout with joy to God, all the earth.

The reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (4:4-7)

Brethren, when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

THE GOSPEL

The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (2:1-12)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard

this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, are by no means least among the rulers of Judea; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern My people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the

star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.



Announcements and Upcoming Events

For a full calendar of events and services at St. George, see our website, www.stgeorgeorthodox.org.

Upcoming Events and Services:

- **Today:** All children in the church will be invited to come forward after the Gospel reading to help put Baby Jesus on the Nativity table.
- **Saturday, Dec. 26:** Vespers, 6:00 pm.
- **This Sunday, Dec. 27: St. Stephen the First Martyr.** Matins, 9am and Divine Liturgy, 10am. Epistle Reader: Mark Kerasotes. Holy Bread/Coffee Hour: OPEN.
- **Next Thursday, Dec. 31: Feast of the Naming and Circumcision of Jesus Christ.** Divine Liturgy at 6:00 PM. *This is also the day the Church commemorates not only the New Year, but also St. Basil the Great and St. Seraphim of Sarov. This would have been the nameday of our first priest Fr. Seraphim Nassar of blessed memory.*

From Fr. Andrew and Khouria Patty

Christ is born! Glorify Him! As we gather to worship the Holy Baby in the manger, my family would like to thank you for all of your cards and generous gifts this Christmas season. We are blessed to be part of such a warm, loving church community and we pray for many more Christmases to come!

The 2016 Holy Bread and Coffee Hour schedule is now posted on the ladies' bulletin board downstairs. Please look over your assigned dates, and let Fr. Andrew know if any changes need to be made. Many thanks for all of your service!

WHAT SHALL WE OFFER THEE, O CHRIST, WHO FOR OUR SAKES HAST APPEARED ON EARTH AS MAN? EVERY CREATURE MADE BY THEE OFFERS THEE THANKS. THE ANGELS OFFER THEE A HYMN; THE HEAVENS A STAR; THE MAGI, GIFTS; THE SHEPHERDS, THEIR WONDER; THE EARTH, ITS CAVE; THE WILDERNESS, THE MANGER. AND WE OFFER THEE A VIRGIN MOTHER. O PRE-ETERNAL GOD, HAVE MERCY UPON US!

(Christmas Vespers hymn)