



OCA - ROEA  
EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS  
ORTHODOX CHURCH

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**"LITURGICAL SERVICES ARE NOT ONE OF THE 'ASPECTS' OF THE CHURCH; THEY EXPRESS ITS VERY ESSENCE, ARE ITS BREATH, ITS HEARTBEAT, ITS CONSTANT SELF-REVELATION."**

**-FR. ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN-**



Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
**THE NATIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST**



Merry Christmas! **Crăciun fericit!**

On this day we commemorate the Nativity of Jesus Christ

**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.

**EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS, Tone 1**

O LORD, save thy people, and bless thine inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries, and by the virtue of thy Cross preserve thy habitation.

**SAINT PARASCHEVA THE NEW, Tone 4**

You chose a silent and solitary life; you followed Christ your Bridegroom. You took his easy yoke in your youth, arming yourself with the sign of the Cross. You contended against spiritual enemies through fasting, tears and labors, O glorious Paraskeva. Now you stand before Christ with the Wise Virgins: Intercede for us who honor your precious memory.

**SAINTS OF NORTH AMERICA, Tone 8**

As the bountiful harvest of Your sowing of salvation, the lands of North America offer to You, O Lord, all the saints who have shone in them. By their prayers keep the Church and our land in abiding peace Through the Theotokos, O most Merciful One.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit 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.

**Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. 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.



EPISTLE

**Galatians (4:4-7) Sunday of the Nativity of Christ**

*O Lord, how magnificent are your works.  
You have made all things in wisdom.*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the [Galatians](#)



**BRETHREN**, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father! So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

GOSPEL

**Matthew 2:1-12. Sunday of the Nativity of Christ**

The Readings is from the Holy Gospel according to [Saint Matthew](#)

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 Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; 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, till 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.



## REFLECTION

# THE WORD BECAME FLESH

*by St John of Kronstadt on the Nativity of Christ*

The Word became flesh; that is, the Son of God, co-eternal with God the Father and with the Holy Spirit, became human – having become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. O, wondrous, awesome and salvific mystery! The One Who had no beginning took on a beginning according to humanity; the One without flesh assumed flesh. God became man – without ceasing to be God. The Unapproachable One became approachable to all, in the aspect of an humble servant. Why, and for what reason, was there such condescension [shown] on the part of the Creator toward His transgressing creatures – toward humanity which, through an act of its own will had fallen away from God, its Creator?

It was by reason of a supreme, inexpressible mercy toward His creation on the part of the Master, Who could not bear to see the entire race of mankind – which, He, in creating, had endowed with wondrous gifts – enslaved by the devil and thus destined for eternal suffering and torment.

And the Word became flesh!...in order to make us earthly beings into heavenly ones, in order to make sinners into saints; in order to raise us up from corruption into incorruption, from earth to heaven; from enslavement to sin and the devil – into the glorious freedom of children of God; from death – into immortality, in order to make us sons of God and to seat us together with Him upon the Throne as His royal children.

O, boundless compassion of God! O, inexpressible wisdom of God! O, great wonder, astounding not only the human mind, but the angelic [mind] as well!

Let us glorify God! With the coming of the Son of God in the flesh upon the earth, with His offering Himself up as a sacrifice for the sinful human race, there is given to those who believe the blessing of the Heavenly Father, replacing that curse which had been uttered by God in the beginning; they are adopted and receive the promise of an eternal inheritance of life. To a humanity orphaned by reason of sin, the Heavenly Father returns anew through the mystery of re-birth, that is, through baptism and repentance. Human nature is deified for the sake of the boundless compassion of the Son of God; and its sins are purified; the defiled are sanctified. The ailing are healed. Upon those in dishonour are boundless honour and glory bestowed. Those in darkness are enlightened by the Divine light of grace and reason. What, then, O, brethren, is required of us in order that we might avail ourselves of all the grace brought unto us from on high by the coming to earth of the Son of God? What is necessary, first of all, is faith in the Son of God, in the Gospel as the salvation-bestowing heavenly teaching; a true repentance of sins and the correction of life and of heart; communion in prayer and in the mysteries [sacraments]; the knowledge and fulfillment of Christ's commandments. Also necessary are the virtues: Christian humility, alms-giving, continence, purity and chastity, simplicity and goodness of heart.

Let us, then, O brothers and sisters, bring these virtues as a gift to the One Who was born for the sake of our salvation – let us bring them in place of the gold, frankincense and myrrh which the Magi brought Him, as to One Who is King, God, and Man, come to die for us. This, from us, shall be the most-pleasing form of sacrifice to God and to the Infant Jesus Christ.



# Christmas Traditions Around the World



## Christmas in Africa:

Preparation for Christmas in the Congo begins when some group is designated to prepare the annual Christmas pageant. Christmas day begins with groups of carolers walking to and fro through the village, along the roadway, by the houses of the missionaries, singing the lovely carols known the world around. Often people may be awakened by a group of carolers beginning to converge on the house of worship. They return home to make final preparation as to the clothes one must wear and also as to his offering for the Christmas service. Christmas in South Africa is a summer holiday. In December, the southern summer brings glorious days of sunshine that carry an irresistible invitation to the beaches, the rivers, and the shaded mountain slopes. Then the South African holiday season reaches its height.



## Christmas in Italy:

The Christmas season in Italy goes for three weeks, starting 8 days before Christmas known as the Novena. During this period, children go from house to house reciting Christmas poems and singing. In some parts shepherds bring musical instruments into the villages, play and sing Christmas songs. In the week before Christmas children go from house to house dressed as shepherds, playing pipes, singing and reciting Christmas poems. They are given money to buy presents. Presents and empty boxes, are drawn from the Urn of Fate - lucky dip, which always contains one gift per person. By twilight, candles are lighted around the family crib known as the Presepio, prayers are said, and children recite poems. At noon on Christmas Day the pope gives his blessing to crowds gathered in the huge Vatican square. In Italy the children wait until Epiphany, January 6, for their presents. It was said that she was told by the three kings that the baby Jesus was born, she was busy and delayed visiting the baby.



## Christmas in Egypt

The Coptic Church is an Orthodox Church and in the Coptic Church Christmas is celebrated on the 7th January. Advent is observed for forty days and during this period people are expected to fast eating no meat, poultry or dairy products. Some people only do this during the last week of Advent. On the Eve of Christmas everyone goes to church wearing a completely new outfit. The Christmas service ends at midnight with the ringing of church bells, then people go home to eat a special Christmas meal known as fata, which consists of bread, rice, garlic and boiled meat. On Christmas morning people in Egypt visit friends and neighbors. They take with them kaik which is a type of shortbread, which they take with them to give to the people they visit and eaten with a drink known as shortbat. Christmas Day is a public holiday for Christians.



**GOD BLESS YOU ALL!  
MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!**

**V.REV FR. ALIN MUNTEANU**