



# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



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# CHURCH BULLETIN

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## The Sunday before the Nativity of Our Lord

### Gospel Reading Matthew 1: 1 - 25

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the

father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

### Apostle Reading Hebrews 11: 9 - 10; 32 - 40

*Brethren*, by faith Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their

dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

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**Synaxarion. Sunday December 19, 2021 (Sunday before Nativity; Sunday of the Fore-bearers of Our Lord):** Holy Martyr Boniface, Saint Aglae the Righteous of Rome; Holy Hierarch Gregentius, Bishop of Ethiopia

# Homily on the Sunday before Christmas

Jesus.”

*And you will call His name*

*(Matthew*

*1:21)*

My beloved, how fast time flies! In a short time we will again celebrate the great feast of Christmas. Because of this, this Sunday is called the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ.

Our holy Church ordained to read as the Gospel today, the beginning, the first chapter of the first Gospel, that according to Matthew, It is a catalog of the forefathers of Christ. But, did Christ have forefathers? As the beginningless God, He did not, He has the heavenly Father. But, as He appeared upon the earth as a perfect man, except sin, He put on flesh from the pure blood of the Most-holy Theotokos. And He was born in a supernatural manner. He has no earthly father, only a mother. His mother is our Panagia. Her parents are Joachim and Anna, and the parents of Joachim and Anna are others, and so on. Thus is marked the great chain of the forefathers.

The first link of the chain of the forefathers of Christ is a great historical personality, Abraham. To Abraham, as we hear in the Epistle, was granted a great proposition, that from his descendants, from the root of Jesse, would be born the Redeemer.

According to this catalog, from Abraham until David is 14 generations, from David to the captivity of Babylon is 14 generations, and from the return from Babylon until the birth of Christ again is 14 generations (Matthew 1:17). [We hear] about fifty names, which do not make an impression on us. They are Hebrew names and seem tiresome, to hear “he gave birth to him”, “who gave birth to him”, to descend the ladder of the forefathers to reach the Virgin Mary, from whom Christ was born.

But these names, which we now hear with indifference, in their era, created a great impression. From them some were generals, other governors, other prophets, others patriarchs, others kings, others wealthy, others wise, like Solomon, David, etc. Now, they don't make an impression. What does this teach us? Like these names were forgotten, thus those who today make an impression and are famous and advertised, after 50-100 years, who will remember them? Somewhere in some page of history, with a small letter, it will be written that they passed from the earth. All of the fireworks and lights will be extinguished. The result? “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (Eccl. 1:2). Wealth and positions are zero,



everything is zero. Only one thing remains, for someone to do the will of God. But while the names of Israeli and niversal history and modern life are drowned in the abyss of time, one name always remains contemporary, to the spite

of the demons. Which? That which was granted to the Divine Infant. The Angel, according to the command of the Lord, told Joseph, the protector of the Panagia: “And you will call His name Jesus.” (Matthew 1:21) What does the name Jesus mean? It is not Greek, it is Hebrew, and translated it means “Savior”. The Child that will be born, in other words, is the Savior. I entreat you to pay attention to this, “the name above every name.” (Phil. 2:9) Why is Christ called “Savior”? We must

give an explanation.

Here on earth where we live, to where man was cast from Paradise, in every place, man is scourged by a variety of misfortunes, which are the consequences of the sinful life. Hunger, thirst, lacking clothing and shelter, sicknesses...all of these are dangers, evils which man tries to mitigate. But there are others as well. There are natural disasters, like earthquakes, droughts, floods, fires, invasions, incurable sicknesses like cancer, and ultimately death. All of these are terrible evils.

But still I haven't told you anything. There is something even more serious—may God enlighten us to understand it. The number one evil, which forms the root of all evil, all of our wretchedness—and unfortunately which we do not give proper meaning to—according to the tongue of the Holy Scriptures, is sin. From there come all other evils, their cause is sin. We shudder when we hear of cancer, but sin however does not make us shudder. We play with her, like children who play with Christmas presents. We don't perceive anything, and because of this mankind is scourged. Whether adultery and fornication and lasciviousness, whether greed and gluttony, whether jealousy and envy, whether anger and rage and indignation, whether malice and hatred and vengeance and fear, sin, this is the source of all misery. If we could, with one miracle, uproot it, then the earth would become Paradise. Who will save us? And even if we remain silent, the rocks themselves will cry out: only One saves! Opening the history book, one can count many people whom the people, for the small service that they offered, were called “saviors”. But these are small saviors. There is only one Savior: Christ.



If someone does something good for you, you remember him, and consider him your benefactor. For example, to the doctor who healed you, you show gratitude. Above all of those benefactors however, is Christ, for He saves us from the worst evil: sin. He saves with His Church.

He is the true Savior. Do we sense this? Only he who senses his sinfulness and says like the Publican: "God, have mercy on me, the sinner" (Luke 18:13), or like the Prodigal Son:

"I have sinned against heaven and before you" (Luke 15:18), or like the Thief: "Remember me, O Lord, when You come unto Your Kingdom" (Luke 23:42), he understands that Christ is the Savior.

And it is not enough of course to just say it, that He is the Savior of men in general. We must sense that He is our personal Savior. God will make you worthy to sense this, if you bow your head in repentance, and tell your sins to your spiritual father, if you go to confession. Then, you will sense that a mountain has been lifted away from you, and you will sense deep gratitude to Christ.

This is what the Thief on the Cross sensed, this is what the Apostles, the Martyrs, all the Saints sensed, like, for example, St. Ignatios the God-bearer, Bishop of Antioch [whom we celebrate today]. When they led him to Rome in order to throw him to the beasts, he wrote about Christ: "My eros has been crucified", in other words, Christ is the eros of my heart. There are few loves that move our carnal generation, only sex. I am not condemning it, God implanted it [within man], but not in order to quench every other eros. Our generation, the generation of Sodom and Gomorrah, does not recognize any other loves. It is right what a philosopher said, that our era is without love. If you don't love Christ, you have not understood anything, and in vain you came to

earth. Beautiful loves are the eros of science, the eros of the fatherland, but above all is the eros of Christ.

In older years, the name of Christ was the sweetest thing. A little child or grandmother would fall to their knees and

make the sign of the Cross, and the first word that they learned to say was the word "Christ". I saw such examples. Now, unfortunately, divine eros not only has been quenched, but some times, has been turned into utterly satanic hate. When I was a preacher in Grevena, and traveled through the high mountains, there where I was walking, I straightaway heard a blasphemy. The first time I heard such a blasphemy. My, my! I said, what is going on here? Are there demons dwelling out here? I approached, therefore, and what did I see? Behind a tree was sitting a father, who had a little boy at his knees, and was teaching him to blaspheme Christ! My God, still, the stars have not become pots to fall upon our heads? Where is the love for Christ? However, let someone curse and dishonor Christ, His name will remain unto the ages. Like the black clouds cannot extinguish the sun, thus blasphemies cannot extinguish the name of Christ. He will remain unto the ages of ages, to the spite of the demons.

I pray that in our land, that not even one blasphemy would be

heard, but that small and great, man and woman, all together will say: "Blessed is God, and glorified is His name", Whom, O children of the Greeks, praise and exalt supremely, unto all the ages. Amen.

**Metropolitan Augustinos Kantiotes of Florina**  
(Source: <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com>)





## Orthodox Homily on the Sunday before Nativity

Today on the Sunday before Nativity, we remember the genealogy of Christ, those who prefigure Him. Matthew's Gospel for today intentionally traces Jesus Christ's lineage through Abraham and recounts Christ's lineage not thru Mary but thru Joseph, Christ's earthly father through adoption. In doing so, he gives us one of those 'sign posts' of our salvation: Jesus Christ, Himself adopted by Joseph, adopts all mankind, bringing us to the Father as adopted sons.

The righteous ancestors of Christ pre-figure and point us to Him; they ready us for the coming of the Messiah, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Throughout the Old Testament, their stories of faith are also stories of redemption, of God working through human sin and failings to prepare the way for the salvation and renewal of the entire human race. God brings about the fulfillment of all His promises to Israel. He gives us a new way of interacting and relating to Him—that of sons and daughters of the living God, sealed by the Holy Spirit, capable of growth in divine grace.

The righteous Seth, who was born to Adam in the place of Able, murdered by his brother Cain, reminds us that Christ was born as the new Adam, to inaugurate a new spiritual race. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all are made alive" (I Cor. 15:22), St. Paul assures us.

We remember Noah, who saved his family from the wickedness and evil around him, whom God used to continue the human race and save animal life on earth. Noah believed God and put his faith in His saving power, thereby saving his household, bearing them upon the waters of the flood in the ark until they reached the dry land God provided for them on Mount Ararat. Christ, likewise, saves his 'household'—all those in the Church—from the stormy seas of deceptive doctrines, every wind of heresy. Christ carries us upon the 'ship of faith,' His Church, to the shore and haven of His Heavenly Kingdom.

We remember Abraham, who offered his son, Isaac, in obedience to God, pre-figuring the offering of Christ Himself, who is both the Offerer and the Offered:



the ultimate and final 'sacrifice' through His defeat of sin and death on the cross, His willing sacrifice of Himself for our salvation. Whereas Abraham's hand was stayed from offering his son, Isaac (as it was a test of his love and devotion toward God), God does not withhold His Only-Begotten Son, His Word made flesh, who enters into death as man and defeats it as God.

Fittingly, Christ's lineage is royal as it is priestly: Christ is both our Great High Priest and King of Kings. He draws His human ancestry from both the royal line of Judah, from which King David hails, and from Levite, the priestly line. The Feast of Christ's holy Nativity is also then referred to as "the Winter Pascha" because We trace our

salvation through the incarnation, in which Christ, the life of the world, enters into and renews that human nature, completing this salvation by defeating sin and death itself on the cross by His death and glorious resurrection. As a result, the Feast of the Nativity and Christ's baptism lead us directly to His cross and resurrection. They cannot be understood without such an understanding of the Incarnation. St. Athanasius writes, "It was in the power of none other to turn the corruptible to incorruption, except the Savior Himself, that had at the beginning also made all things out of nought: and that none other could create anew the likeness of God's image for men, save the Image of the Father..." (4th century, *On the Incarnation*).

Isaiah, likewise, prophetically told God's faithful 700 years before Christ to look for this sign as they awaited the Messiah and all that God had promised Israel and the world: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). 'Immanuel' means, "God is with us." He is with us through His Incarnation, through His abiding presence in His Church, through the Eucharist, the Sacrament of His Holy Body and Blood. These very words, "God is with us," are used by St. John to describe the miraculous Incarnation of God: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The Sunday before Nativity is then an invitation, the most important invitation of all—one with eternal consequence: to become adopted sons of God, to be grafted into His redeemed race of the ‘new Adam.’ It is also a call to renewal of that adoption. We too can become part of salvation history, part of the spiritual genealogy of Christ, His progeny by grace. St. John declares in the Gospel, “as many as have received Him, to them He gave power to become sons of God” (Jn. 1:12-13). As Christ Himself was ‘adopted’ by Joseph so we too become adopted by Christ into His redeemed race. Through Baptism, we put on Christ (Gal. 3:27) and enter into that redeemed race of Christ God, the new Adam.

We have in promise, then, the gift of grace as we journey to the attainment of our salvation. We battle with all those passions that would otherwise drive us from this redeemed life with Christ, cause us to be ‘unfit’ for the Kingdom of God, to be in His holy, divine presence. We pray. We repent. We confess. We learn step by step to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to become obedient as Christ is obedient, to become humble, as Christ is humble, having condescended to become one of His own creation. In this way, you and I become lovers of the Truth even as we die to self, even as Christ Himself has led the way in His defeat of sin and death on our behalf by virtue of His cross made possible by His Incarnation-in-the-flesh.

This is the message that the genealogy of Christ directs us to. In order to attain salvation, each of us learns to live, not for our own will, but for the will of God who became incarnate for our sake.

Now the Feast of the Incarnation is upon us. We look with great expectation and renewed vigor to Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, as His salvific Incarnation draws near. He who has become incarnate in the flesh for our sake, for our salvation, desires to make us adopted sons and daughters of the Father and co-heirs of His eternal Kingdom. Will you receive Him as He comes to be born as a little child? St. Gregory Palamas offers us this challenge: “May we all attain to this, to the glory of Christ and of His Father without beginning and of the life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and unto unceasing ages. Amen” (Homily Fifty-Seven on the Sunday of the Fathers). Christ is born! Glorify Him!

**Fr. Robert Miclean**

(Source: <http://www.orthodoxannapolis.org/>)

## HOLY TRINITY’S Liturgical Schedule from December 19 to December 27, 2021

### **Sunday December 19 (Sunday before the Nativity of Our Lord):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 am - Sunday School  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

### **Friday December 24 — Nativity Eve (fasting Day)**

### **Saturday December 25 — Nativity of Our Lord:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - HERE COMES SANTA!  
Sunday School Christmas Carols  
Concert  
1:00 pm - Christmas Brotherly Meal

### **Sunday December 26 — Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos (Second Day of Christmas):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

### **Monday December 27 — Saint Steven’s Day:**

9:00 am - Utrenie  
10:00 am - Liturghie  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour