



Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self – isolation for the Orthodox
Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon

CHRISTMAS EDITION 20th December 2020

CHRIST IS COME FROM HEAVEN: LET US GO OUT TO MEET HIM



The Nativity Homily of St. Isaac the Syrian

This Christmas night bestowed peace on the whole world;

so let no one threaten.

This is the night of the Most Gentle One -

let no one be cruel.

This is the night of the Humble One -

let no one be proud.

Now is the day of joy –

let us not seek revenge.

Now is the day of Good Will -

let us not be mean minded.

In this Day of Peace

let us not be conquered by anger.

Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake;

so, rich one, invite the poor to your table.

Today we receive a Gift for which we did not ask;

so let us give alms to those who implore and beg us.

This present Day cast open the heavenly doors to our prayers;

let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.

Today the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of our humanity,

in order for humanity to be decorated by the Seal of Divinity.

The Icon of the Nativity

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The whole artistic composition of the icon is centered on the cave and everything converges upon it. This dark hole, from which a Light is gleaming, appears as the centre point of a spiral. Jesus is at the mouth of the cave, as if He had come forth from the earth itself. The scene renders the true meaning of the Incarnation. When Adam was created, he was formed out of the earth; today the second Adam, Christ, *recreates* man in His person. The Son of God at the mouth of the cave has taken our human condition upon Himself: He is born of the earth and will return to the earth at the time of His burial. "The first man was from earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47, 49).

Christ has come down from heaven to a hollow in the earth. Later He will penetrate to the very depths of hell in order to raise us up again with Himself! Like the shepherds and the Magi, we are overwhelmed by a great joy at the Christmas feast. Nothing can deprive us of this joy, for "God is with us", expressed in Hebrew by the name "Emmanuel"!

From *The Living God*, I (See <https://svspress.com/living-god-the-set/>)

This Week We Celebrate

On Sunday 20th December:

Commemoration of All the Righteous who pleased God, from Adam down to Joseph the Betrothed of the Mother of God.

We wish **Adam R** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Friday 25th: **THE NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**

The Adoration of the Magi: Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar

Commemoration of the Shepherds who went to see the Lord

We wish **Fr Ian** and all at the **Parish of the Nativity** in Lewes a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**



Bethlehem has opened Eden: come, let us see!

We have found joy in secret: come, let us seize the Paradise that is within the cave!

There the unwatered Root has appeared, from which forgiveness blossoms forth.

There is found the undug Well, from which David longed to drink of old.

There the Virgin has borne a child, quenching Adam's and David's thirst.

Let us hurry to this place, where now is born a young Child, the pre-eternal God.

Ikos from Matins for Christmas Day

At His Side, We Are United

All mankind mystically approaches Bethlehem, running to follow the rays of the God-sent star, to bask in the resplendent light radiating from the child in the cave. National boundaries and races all disappear in the penetrating, searching, probing, revealing illumination beaming forth from that shelter in the earth. At his side, we are united with our loved ones: both those near and those far; those on earth and those in the bosom of Abraham; those into whose eyes we can see, and those whose gaze we can only recall; those whose hands we can grasp, and those whose hands we can only remember. Yes, the entire Church from all time kneels in adoration with the angelic host at the foot of the Lord, the infant Messiah.

From Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit's Nativity Pastoral Letter 2013

THOUGHTS FOR THE NATIVITY

*A strange and most wonderful mystery do I see:
the cave is heaven; the Virgin the throne of the cherubim;
the manger a room, in which Christ, the God whom nothing can contain is laid.
Him do we praise and magnify.*

This beautiful hymn, attributed to St Cosmas, is the Irmos of the Ninth Ode of the First Canon of the Nativity, which we begin to hear, as a prefiguring of the Great Feast to come, from the beginning of the Nativity Fast. It contains striking images, juxtaposed in contrasting pairs, which together summarise in a vivid way the theology of the Incarnation. God made flesh comes into the world which He made in all humility as a helpless child. He is sought by Magi, following a sign from heaven, a shining star, and visited by them, bringing their gifts, each of which has spiritual symbolism. He is attended by shepherds, who were looking after their sheep in fields close to Bethlehem, in response to a vision of angels in the heavens, singing:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.”

Having learned of the birth of the Child King, the evil King Herod seeks to destroy him, and proceeds to murder the innocent children of the region. Jesus’ parents escape with him into Egypt.

We know the story so well, yet what does the little Child of Bethlehem mean for us? Jesus’ childhood is more than a model for us to imitate. It is one of those mysteries of the Saviour’s life which, although they are historical and transitory, also have an eternal reality. Christmas is a good time to honour the mystery of Jesus’ childhood.

“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.”

Lord Jesus, before we leave Bethlehem, or come to the end of the Great Feast of the Nativity, allow us to see something of what the shepherds saw, to hear something of what they heard, and to receive in our hearts the message which is preached to us from the manger. Amen.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Father Patrick

Noticeboard

This week’s **Virtual Visit** with the Orthodox Fellowship of Saint John the Baptist will be to **Bethlehem** on Monday 21st December at 7pm. To register go to: <https://forerunner.org.uk/winter-series-2020-21/>

Services in December

Saturday 19th December 6pm: Vespers at Saint Anne's

Wednesday 23rd December 6.30 pm: Vigil (Eve of Christmas Eve) at Saint Anne's

Saturday 26th December 6pm: Vespers at Saint Anne's

Sunday 27th December 10.30 am: Divine Liturgy (Parish celebration of the Nativity)

Service to be held at Saint Stephen's Church, Exeter High Street.

(Details of Covid precautions etc for this occasion will follow shortly.)

Anyone searching for **on-line Christmas services** by the New Calendar might want to bear in mind St Tikhon's Monastery in Pennsylvania. The time distance is awkward (5 hours behind GMT), but the singing is clear, beautiful and prayerful, and the whole atmosphere simple and unpretentious. Welcoming Christmas Day with a midnight (GMT) Vigil would be one option! See further:

<https://sttikhonsmonastery.org/>

https://sttikhonsmonastery.org/calendar/month_print.php?month=12&year=2020

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Tikhons-Orthodox-Monastery-446378222150244/videos/346525573349892/?extid=QVvcD9wV39DQanvg>

Christmas greetings and blessings to everyone from Fr John and Dawn.

Father Nicanor and Val send everyone their love at Christmas

Have a Blessed, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
I would like to send my warmest regards and blessings to you all from St Anne parish. I miss you all.
With love, Manuela

My wishes of Christmas joy to all, especially to the children, whose bright faces I so miss seeing Sunday by Sunday.....and also to Fr Nicanor....both ends of the life span!
Mother Sarah

Christmas greetings to one and all from Hugh

Please extend my Christmas Greetings and best wishes to the parish. Ancel

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

*Warmest Christmas greetings and prayers to all the parish, faced with a liturgically depleted Christmas at the end of a traumatic year.
Know that candles will be lit for you at the festal services!
Elizabeth Theokritoff*

We would like to wish everyone in our parish family a peaceful, healthy and happy Christmas! We miss you all.
With much love Nom, Lily and Rob xxx



To the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias
Christ is born! Glorify Him!

May God bless you and grant you all a peaceful and joyful Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, and a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Fr Patrick and Mary

The Editors Wish All Our Readers a Safe, Happy and Blessed Christmas

The Coming of the Magi

Last we consider the time of their coming, the season of the year. It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in the very dead of winter.

And these difficulties they overcame, of a wearisome, irksome, troublesome, dangerous, unseasonable journey; and for all this they came. And came it cheerfully and quickly, as appeareth by the speed they made. It was but *vidimus, venimus*, with them; they 'saw', and they 'came'; no sooner saw, but they set out straightway. So as upon the first appearing of the star, as it might be last night, it called them away, they made ready straight to begin their journey this morning. A sign they were highly persuaded of His birth, believed some great matter of it, that they took all these pains, made all this haste that they might be there to worship Him with all the possible speed they could. Sorry for nothing so much as that they could not be there soon enough, with the very first, to do it even this day, the day of His birth. All considered, there is more in *venimus*, 'we came', than shews at the first sight. It was not for nothing it was said in the first verse, *ecce venerunt*, 'behold, they came'; their coming hath a 'behold' on it, it well deserves it.

And we, what should we have done? Sure these men of the East will rise in judgment against the men of the West, that is with us, and their faith against ours in this point. With them it was but *vidimus, venimus*; with us it would have been but *veniemus*, 'we will come'. at most. Our fashion is to see and see again before we stir a foot, specially if it be to the worship of Christ. Come such a journey at such a time? No; but fairly have put it off to the spring of the year, till the days longer, and the ways fairer, and the weather warmer, till better travelling to Christ.

But then for the distance, desolateness, tediousness, and the rest, any of them were enough to mar our coming quite. It must be no great way, nor it must not be through no desert, over no Petra. If rugged or uneven the way, if the weather ill-disposed, if any so little danger, it is enough to stay us. To Christ we cannot travel, but weather and way and all must be fair. If not, no journey, but wait and see farther. As indeed, all our religion is rather *vidimus*, a contemplation, than *venimus*, a motion, or stirring to do ought.

From Lancelot Andrewes : Sermon on the Nativity, Christmas Day 1622.