

Sunday, December 20

Sunday before the Nativity - The Holy Fathers

Sunday Tropar, tone 4: When the disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the glorious news of the resurrection * and cast off the ancestral condemnation, * they proudly told the apostles: * "Death has been plundered! Christ our God is risen * granting to the world great mercy."

Tropar of the Holy Fathers, tone 2: The three young men who are the great guides of the faith, * rejoiced in the pit of flame as if they were in a water of rest; * and the prophet Daniel appeared as a shepherd to the lions. * O Christ God, save our souls for their sake.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

Christmas Pre-festive Kondak, tone 3: Today the Virgin is on her way to the cave * where she will give birth in a manner beyond understanding * to the Word Who is in all eternity. * Rejoice, therefore, universe, when you hear it heralded. * With the angels and the shepherds, glorify Him * Who chose to be seen as a newborn babe * while remaining God in all eternity.

Prokimen, tone 4: Blessed are you, and praiseworthy, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and glorious forever is your name.

Verse: For you are just in all you have done.

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10; 17-23; 32-40
Brothers and Sisters! By faith Abraham sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise; for he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose designer and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac; he who had received the promises was ready to sacrifice his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be called." He reasoned that God was able to raise from the dead, and so he received Isaac back as a symbol. By faith Isaac invoked for Jacob and Esau blessings that were still to be. By faith

Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped God, leaning on the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, near the end of his life spoke of the Exodus of the Israelites, and gave instructions about his burial. By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after his birth, thereby disregarding the king's edict because they saw that he was a beautiful child. What more shall I recount? I have no time to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, did what was just, obtained the promises; they broke the jaws of lions, put out raging fires, escaped the devouring sword; though weak they were made powerful, became strong in battle, and turned back foreign invaders. Women received back their dead through resurrection. Others were tortured and would not receive deliverance, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Still others endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword's point; they went about garbed in the skins of sheep or goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and on mountains, they dwelt in caves and in holes of the earth. Yet despite the fact that all of these were approved because of their faith, they did not obtain what had been promised. God had made a better plan, a plan which included us. Without us, they were not to be made perfect.

Alleluia Verses: O God, our ears have heard, our fathers have declared to us.
But you have saved us from our foes, and those who hated us you put to shame.

Gospel: Matthew 1: 1-25

A family record of Jesus Christ, Son of David, son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac the father of Jacob. Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse, Jesse the father of King David, David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa. Asa was the father of Jehosaphat, Jehosaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile. After the Babylonian exile Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor. Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud. Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary. It was of her that Jesus who is called the Messiah was born. Thus the total number of generations is: from Abraham to David, fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian captivity, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian captivity to the Messiah, fourteen generations. Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, an upright man unwilling to expose her to the law, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and

said to him: "Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." All this happened to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son. and they shall call him Emmanuel," a name which means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke he did as the angel of the Lord had directed him and received her into his home as his wife. He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son, whom he named Jesus.

Communion Hymn: Praise the Lord from the heavens, Praise Him in the highest. Exult, you just, in the Lord; praise from the upright is fitting. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!