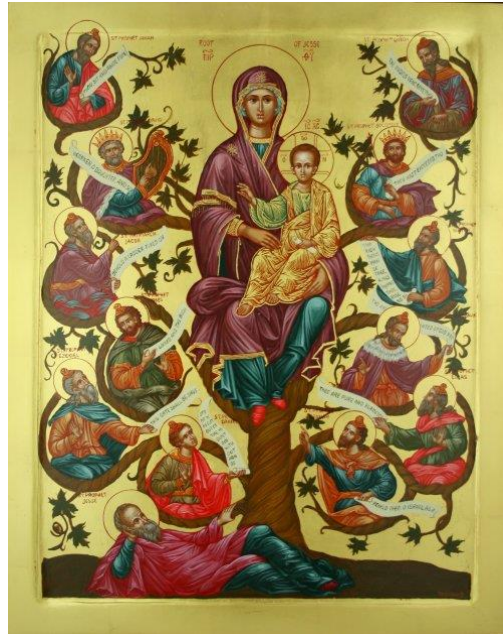


Pylypiwka - The Pre Christmas Fast Week #6

A Journey of Expectation, Preparation and Fulfilment



The Jesse Tree Icon by Iconographer Tatiana Romanova Grant

Sunday of the Forefathers

The second Sunday before the Nativity is dedicated to our forefathers. The ancestors of our Lord are our ancestors, for by the Incarnation we are made members of God's own family. Genesis 9 informs us that everyone is a descendent of Noah. All the nations of the earth are born of Noah's sons: Shem, Ham, or Japheth.

God chose only one of Noah's sons for a special mission and purpose. God singled out the line of Shem. "Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem." Shem is the progenitor, the grandfather, so to speak, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fathers of God's chosen people.

God promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed through his family. Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world is the promised descendent of this family. Jesus is the great blessing produced by Shem's family. King David, another descendent of Shem reveals the destiny of his sacred bloodline. David's Spirit-inspired canticle predicts that foreigners, all the families and nations that originate from Noah's two other sons, will serve his specially chosen descendent. We see the prophecy fulfilled in Christ Jesus: the eternal Son of God who exercises his dominion over all nations from His throne at the right hand of the Father.

Isaiah also predicts that foreigners will be joined to the chosen race. These outsiders will not be slaves but will receive a place in the family that is better than those of native born sons and daughters. We sinners, the outcasts separated from God by sin have become incorporated into the bloodline of Jesus Christ by His incarnation, life, passion, and resurrection. The angels of heaven look at us with envy. They are merely God's servants, but we, by our baptism, are members of His body!

Jesus' parable of the Banquet reveals that God's Kingdom is open to all (Lk 14:16-24). God calls all people to the unity of his family, but many refuse to enter. Many would rather follow their own plans and preferences. Sinners (the poor, maimed, blind and lame), find their way to the banquet through repentance because they know they are in need of God's mercy. The self righteous will miss out.

Let us recognize God's plan from all time, to form a family for Himself. We are His chosen people, His holy nation. The sacred bloodline is the bloodline of Jesus Christ, to whom we are united through the sacramental Mysteries. Our native land is heaven and we are divinized with the divinity of Christ. Because of the Incarnation, we are now truly members of the supernatural family of God.

Adapted from Christ is Born: A Journey of Expectation, Preparation, and Fulfillment; Office of Religious Education, Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, 2005: **pages 89-90**

Sunday of the Holy Ancestors

On the Sunday before Christmas, the Church celebrates the ancestors of Christ, including the long line of Patriarchs and Kings who formed Israel's history.

Today's Epistle praises the faith of the Patriarch's: "By faith Abraham ... by faith Jacob ... by faith Moses..." These ancestors of Christ believed without seeing Him and anticipated Him as Messiah from afar. They died in faith and received their reward numbered among those who had not yet heard but had believed in the Good News.

All ancestors of Jesus were not just and holy people. Among them were sinners: those had committed incest, adultery, and murder. In the Old Testament it is prophesied that the Messiah will come from the House of David. Christ includes in His ancestors the incestuous relationship between David and Bathsheba. Of the many sons of David, Christ came from the line of Solomon, the son of Bathsheba. David caused the death of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, because she was pregnant with David's child.

The sinners mentioned in this genealogy are characterized not only by their sinfulness but also by their ultimate repentance. David and Bathsheba debased themselves in adultery and murder but David found conversion and contrition. David, in Psalm 50 writes: "Have mercy on

me, O God according to your great goodness...blot out my iniquities for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me..."

Rising above the collection of Christ's ancestors is Mary, the Theotokos, the God bearer. Because of her purity, the angel Gabriel approached Mary to be Christ's mother. He could not be born of a woman cursed by Adam's sin. He must be born of a pure and holy mother. On one hand, in Christ's ancestry we have the paragon of virtue, the height of innocence and virginity; at the same time there lurks wickedness and depravity.

As we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let us see in His genealogy recognition of our own faults. Each of us has some features of those ancestors of Jesus that are far from holy. With humility and repentance let us turn away from sin and invite Christ to come and be born in hearts. Let us strive to rid ourselves of the thoughts and passions that distract us as our hearts, minds, and voices sing "God is with us".



Adapted from Christ is Born: A Journey of Expectation, Preparation, and Fulfillment; Office of Religious Education, Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, 2005: **pages 97-98**

Resources:

Christ is Born: A Journey of Expectation, Preparation, and Fulfillment; Office of Religious Education, Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, 2005

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