



Genealogical [tree](#) of [Christ](#) and the Virgin. Jesse the Righteous is reclining at the base and from his body springs a trunk with branches corresponding to the patriarchs. Two angels crown the Virgin. Prophet-kings wear royal robes, crown and sceptre, ordinary prophets a simple mitre. (17th c., [Athos Protaton](#)).

★  
And  
there shall  
come forth a  
rod out of the stem of Jesse,  
and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:  
And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;  
and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD:  
and he shall not judge  
after the sight of his eyes,  
neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:  
But with righteousness shall he judge the poor,  
and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:  
and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And  
righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.  
The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;  
and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed;  
their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand  
on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth  
shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there  
shall be  
a root of Jesse,  
which shall stand  
for an ensign  
of the people;  
to it shall  
the Gentiles seek:  
and his rest  
shall be glorious.

Nativity Great Vespers  
Isaiah (11:1-10)

FESTAL CELEBRATIONS YAHOO GROUP  
ORTHODOX JESSE TREE

An introduction concerning our Lord's genealogy written by St. John of Damascus can be found at:  
[http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/stjohn\\_exp4.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/stjohn_exp4.aspx):

**Additional Reading For Symbols  
of the 52 Ornament Orthodox Jesse Tree**

**Day 1 – November 15 (November 28 OC)**

• **1: Creation of Universe (Sun), Read Genesis 1-2:4**

If the the world has a beginning, and if it has been created, enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was the Creator: or rather, in the fear that human reasonings may make you wander from the truth, Moses has anticipated enquiry by engraving in our hearts, as a seal and a safeguard, the awful name of God: 'In the beginning God created' - It is He, beneficent Nature, Goodness without measure, a worthy object of love for all beings endowed with reason, the beauty the most to be desired, the origin of all that exists, the source of life, intellectual light, impenetrable wisdom, it is He who 'in the beginning created heaven and earth.' (St. Basil the Great, The Hexaemeron).

The Royal Hours of the Nativity

Hearken, O heaven, and give ear, O earth. Let the foundations be shaken, and let trembling lay hold upon the nethermost parts of the world. For our God and Creator has clothed Himself in created flesh, and He who with His strong arm fashioned the creation reveals Himself in the womb of her that He formed. O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

Nativity of the Theotokos, Forefeast, Troparion (Tone 4)

Today from the stem of Jesse and from the loins of David,

The handmaid of God Mary is being born for us.

Therefore all creation is renewed and rejoices!

Heaven and earth rejoice together.

Praise her, you families of nations,

For Joachim rejoices and Anna celebrates crying out:

"The barren one gives birth to the Theotokos, the Nourisher of our life!"

Nativity of the Theotokos, Troparion, (Tone 4)

Your Nativity, O Virgin,

Has proclaimed joy to the whole universe!

The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,

Has shone from You, O Theotokos!

By annulling the curse,

He bestowed a blessing.

By destroying death, He has granted us eternal Life.

The sun knoweth his going down. Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. (Vespers, Psalm 103(4):19-24)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 1

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* (Genesis 1:1).

Brethren, this is God's answer through the mouth of the prophet, the answer to the question that we all thirst to know: "Whence comes this world?" God hears our question, spoken or unspoken; He hears and gives an answer. Just as He gives rain to the dry earth, just as He gives health to a sick person, just as He gives bread and clothing to the body, so also does He give an answer to our spirit. He gives an answer to the question that has caused it hunger and thirst, pain and nakedness, until it (the spirit) is nourished and quenched, restored to health, and is clothed with the true answer. This is the question: "Whence, therefore, comes this world?" This is the answer: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*. This world is not of itself, just as nothing in this world is of itself, neither is this world of an evil power, neither is this world of many creators, good and evil, but rather it is of the one gracious God. This answer evokes joy in the heart of every man and incites him to good works. And by this we know, among other things, that this is the only correct and true answer. Every other answer, in contradiction to this, evokes sorrow and fear in us and incites us to evil works, and therefore we know, among other things, that such answers are false. Brethren, the world is from God-let us rejoice and be glad! The world is of divine origin, and consequently its end will also be in God. The world is of a good root, and consequently it will bring forth good fruit. It proceeded from the chamber of light, and it will end in light. When we know that the beginning is good, then we know that it tends toward good and that the end will be good. Behold, in these words about the beginning, the prophecy about the end is already hidden. As was the beginning, so also will be the end. He from Whom the beginning came, in Him also is the end. Therefore, let us hold fast to this saving truth, that we may have shining hope and be strengthened in love toward the One Who, out of love, created us.

O my brethren, the two greatest works of God that have been revealed up to now are the creation of the world and the creation of the Church. In both works, brethren, man is the main object of God's love. Let us be thankful with our every breath to the Most-gracious God.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 1-2, Creation of Heaven, the Invisible World and Creation of the Earth, the Visible World:

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## **Day 2 – November 16 (November 29 OC)**

- **2: Creation of Man (Two People), Read Genesis 2:4-25**

The sun was formed by a mere command, but man by God's hands: 'Let us make man after our image, and after our likeness' (Gen. 1:26). A wooden image of an earthly king is held in honor; how much more a rational image of God? (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures: Lecture 12 no. 5)

Nativity of the Theotokos, Kontakion, (Tone 4)

By Your Nativity, O Most Pure Virgin,

Joachim and Anna are freed from barrenness;  
Adam and Eve, from the corruption of death.  
And we, your people, freed from the guilt of sin, celebrate and sing to you:  
The barren woman gives birth to the Theotokos, the nourisher of our life!

The tree of life which was planted by God in Paradise pre-figured this precious Cross.  
-St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*

Adam, before the fall...participated in..divine illumination and resplendence, and because he was truly clothed in a garment of glory he was not naked, nor was he unseemly by reason of his nakedness. He was far more richly adorned than those who now deck themselves out with diadems of gold and brightly sparkling jewels. St. Paul calls this divine illumination and grace our celestial dwelling when he says, 'For this we sigh, yearning to be clothed in our heavenly habitation, since clothed we will not be found naked' (2 Cor. 5:2). St. Gregory Palamas (Topics of Natural and Theological Science no. 67, The Philokalia Vol. 4 edited by Palmer, Sherrard and Ware; Faber and Faber pg. 377)

So great was the honor and providential care which God bestowed upon man that He brought the entire sensible world into being before him and for his sake. The kingdom of heaven was prepared for him from the foundation of the world (cf. Matt. 25:34); God first took counsel concerning him, and then he was fashioned by God's hand and according to the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). God did not form the whole man from matter and from the elements of this sensible world, as He did the other animals. He formed only man's body from these materials; but man's soul He took from things super celestial or, rather, it came from God Himself when mysteriously He breathed life into man (cf. Gen. 2:7). St. Gregory Palamas (Topics of Natural and Theological Science no. 24, The Philokalia Vol. 4 edited by Palmer, Sherrard and Ware; Faber and Faber pg. 356)

Of all visible and invisible creation man alone is created dual. He has a body composed of four elements, the senses and breath; and he has a soul, invisible, unsubstantial, incorporeal joined to the body in an ineffable and unknown manner; they interpenetrate and yet are not compounded, combine and yet do not coalesce. This is what man is: an animal both mortal and immortal, both visible and invisible, both sensory and intellectual, capable of seeing the visible and knowing the invisible creation. St. Simeon the New Theologian (Practical and Theological Precepts no. 152, Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart; Faber and Faber pgs. 133-134).

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, November 5  
*Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come and hath put all things under His feet* (Ephesians 1:21-22).

Behold, the heights to which God exalts the being of man! Here, Christ's Divine Nature is not the subject, but rather His human nature. This is not about the eternal Word of God, but rather about the man Jesus, whom God raised from the dead and exalted-not only above this whole visible and mortal world, but also above the invisible and immortal, far above all the orders of angels and the heavenly powers; far above all the known and unknown wondrous hierarchies of heaven; far above every created being, known and unknown; and far above every name in the material and the spiritual worlds. My brethren, do you see how our All-glorious Creator fulfilled the promise He gave to Adam when he banished him from Paradise, and repeated more clearly to Abraham, and repeated still more clearly through the prophets and David? Do you see how the Lord of Sabaoth began to glorify the human race

by glorifying the man Jesus, the Son of God, in Whom was incarnate the divinity of God? As the first in glory, God first glorified Him, and then, in order, all those who are numbered with Him, and who by the grace of the Holy Spirit are named and written in the Book of Life for eternal glory. It is not without cause that the Church sings to the Mother of God: "More honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim." Where the Risen Lord is exalted, His Most-holy Mother is also exalted, as are also His holy apostles, in accordance with His words to His heavenly Father: *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am* (John 17:24).

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 3, How God Created the First People:  
[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

### **Day 3 – November 17 (November 30 OC)**

- **3: The Fall (Fruit), Read Genesis 3:1-24**

By the tree of knowledge was Adam forced to depart from paradise; and by the tree of the Cross was the thief made to dwell in paradise. For the one by tasting broke the commandment of the Creator; while the other, crucified with Him, confessed the hidden God, crying out: Remember me in Thy kingdom! (29th Sunday After Pentecost, Third Antiphon)

Through food did the enemy lead Adam forth from paradise; but by the Cross hath Christ led back to it the thief who cried: Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom! (2nd Sunday After Pentecost., Third Antiphon)

The fruit which slew me was beautiful and good to eat; but Christ is the Tree of life, and eating of Him I do not die, but cry out with the thief: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom!

O Compassionate One, Who wast lifted up upon the Cross, Thou hast erased the record of Adam's ancient sin, and hast saved the whole human race from deception. Wherefore, we hymn Thee, O Lord and Benefactor.

Thou didst nail our sins to the Cross, O compassionate Christ, and by Thy death Thou didst slay death, O Thou Who didst raise up the dead from among the dead. Wherefore, we worship Thy holy resurrection.

The serpent once poured its venom into the ears of Eve; but on the tree of the Cross Christ poured forth the sweetness of life upon the world. Wherefore we cry out: Remember us, O Lord, in Thy kingdom!  
(Sunday of the Last Judgement, Third Antiphon)

From paradise didst Thou drive our forefather Adam, who had broken thy commandment, O Christ; but, O Compassionate One, Thou didst cause to dwell therein the thief who confessed Thee on the cross, crying out: "Remember me, O Saviour, in Thy Kingdom!" (Beatitude Verse 8 from the Octoechos)

Hearken, O Adam, and rejoice with Eve; for he who of old stripped you both naked, and by deception hath taken all of us captive, hath been set at naught by the Cross of Christ. (Third Antiphon, 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

Come, all ye nations, let us worship the blessed Tree whereby everlasting righteousness hath come to be; for he who by the tree deceived our forefather Adam is himself deceived by the Cross, and he who by tyranny didst hold fast the royal house doth fall, cast down by a strange fall. By the Blood of God the venom of the serpent is washed away, and the curse of the just condemnation was lifted by the Righteous One when He was condemned by an unjust sentence; for it was fitting that the tree be healed by a Tree, and that, by the sufferings of the Dispassionate One on the Tree, the sufferings of the condemned be loosed. Glory, O Christ our King, to Thy wise dispensation toward us, whereby Thou hast saved all, in that Thou art good, and lovest mankind. (Vespers, Exaltation of the Cross)

From her, from whom transgressions went forth among the human race, hath her correction and incorruption blossomed forth, the Theotokos, who is led today into the house of God. (Entry of the Most Holy Lady Theotokos into the Temple)

Adam, God's first-formed man, transgressed: could He [God] not at once have brought death upon him? But see what the Lord does, in His great love towards man. He casts him out from Paradise, for because of sin he was unworthy to live there; but He puts him to dwell over against Paradise: that seeing whence he had fallen, and from what and into what a state he was brought down, he might afterwards be saved by repentance.

-St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures: Lecture 2 no. 7)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 8  
*Cursed is the ground in thy works* (Genesis 3:17).

After Adam and Eve's sin, God pronounced a punishment. He did not pronounce the punishment immediately but after waiting a period of time for their repentance. This is shown in the conversation into which God entered with Adam after his sin. *Where art thou?* (Genesis 3:9), God asked Adam. And when Adam said that he hid because of his nakedness, God asked him again: *Who told thee that thou wast naked?* (Genesis 3:11). Instead of repenting, Adam then began to accuse his wife. After that, God pronounced the punishment. Upon the serpent, which served as the weapon of the devil, fell the infinite curse. The woman was condemned to bear children in pain and to have her will subject to the authority of her husband. This is not a curse but rather a punishment with hope. Man was condemned to work the land. But what do the words, *Cursed is the ground in thy works*, mean? Did God curse the ground as He cursed the serpent with an infinite curse? By no means! The ground is cursed only in the sinful works of man. Because of man's sin, the earth produces thorns; because of sin, there is infertility; because of sin, there are droughts, floods, earthquakes, plagues, and destructive insects such as grasshoppers and caterpillars. That the ground is not cursed in its entirety is clear from this: that the earth also produces good fruits. God, through the prayers of the righteous, has always blessed the fruits of the earth necessary for human life, and even the angels of God, as the guests of Abraham, tasted the earth's harvest (Genesis 18:1-8). For in what way is the earth and all the rest of God's creation (except the serpent) culpable for Adam's sin? Nevertheless, *the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now* (Romans 8:22). All creation does not groan or travail because of a curse upon itself but rather because of man's sinful works, which are cursed. O my brethren, let us be ashamed of our sin, for which even God's innocent creation suffers.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 5-7, The Fall into Sin, The Results of the Fall into Sin and the Promise of a Saviour, Discussion of the Fall into Sin:

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 4 – November 18 (December 1 OC)

- **4: Noah (Rainbow), Read Genesis 6:9-7:6,7:11-24,8:1-24**

“For a hundred years Noah called people to him, but only the dumb animals came.” —Elder Nectarius of Optina

For from the beginning the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and anew the Scripture witnesseth that water has the power of purification. In the time of Noah, God washed away the sin of the world by water. By water every impure person is purified, according to the law, even the very garments being washed with water.

-From John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*

It took Noah a hundred years to build his ark; log upon log he dragged to the construction. Do as he did; drag log upon log to your construction, patiently, in silence, day after day, and do not inquire about your surroundings. Remember that Noah was the only one in the whole world who 'walked with God' (Gen. 6:9), that is, in prayer. Imagine the crowding, the darkness, the stench, that he had to live in until he could step out into the pure air and build an altar to the Lord. The air and the altar you will find within you, explains St. John Chrysostom, but only after you have willingly gone through the same narrow gate as Noah. *The Way of the Ascetics*, by Tito Colliander

It should not frighten you that in the Church the bad are many and the good few. For the Ark, which in the midst of the Flood was a figure of this Church, was wide below and narrow above, and at the summit measured but one cubit (Gen. 6:16). And we are to believe that below were the four-footed animals and serpents, above the birds and men. It was wide where the beasts were, narrow where men lived; for the Holy Church is indeed wide in the number of those who are carnal minded, narrow in those who are spiritual. For where she suffers the morals and beastly ways of men, there she enlarges her bosom. But where she has the care of those whose lives are founded on spiritual things, there she leads to the highest place; but since they are few, this part is narrow .... And so the more the wicked abound so much the more must we suffer them in patience; for on the threshing floor few are the grains carried into the barns, but high the piles of chaff that are burned with fire.

-St. Gregory the Great

Therefore, since it is undoubtedly and completely sure that we must believe without doubt, only this remains, that which it is necessary to seek with all one's might and is to be found by every means. What in reality is this? It is this: that we may attain salvation with all that we do. For idle faith and works without faith are both rejected in the sight of God. Let us consider what has been said in the light of the following: for God, who has shown himself to us as being of three hypostases, has also shown this most evident way to us. And, indeed, know also that faith, hope, and love [cf. I Cor 13:13], the golden threefold rainbow, when kept by us, effects salvation for us.

-Patriarch Jeremiah II, 16 century

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 9

*Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:9).*

To be righteous among the righteous is a great and praiseworthy deed, but how far greater and more praiseworthy a deed it is to be righteous among the unrighteous. Noah lived among men who were filled with unrighteousness and evil; he lived among them for five hundred years and remained righteous before God: *Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8)*. The Most-high Judge, who looks at all the works of mankind and evaluates them without prejudice and without error, valued the labors of Noah because, in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation, he remained in the righteousness of God; and God rewarded him with His grace. Assuredly, Noah endured much misery and bitterness from his evil neighbors. Assuredly, he was unable to have a friend among them. The greatest satisfaction for a sinner is to drag a righteous man down into his own mire and to share his sin with him. But Noah did not allow himself to be dragged down or misled. Noah favored God's friendship over that of unrighteous men. It was dearer to him to walk with God without men, than to walk with men without God. Fear of God, the Creator and Judge, preserved him from the worldwide corruption; and he was not only righteous but also *perfect in his generations*. That is, he did not allow himself, even in the least, to be contaminated by the common evil, but rather he cleaved to God's righteousness. The allurements of sin and the ridicule of the sinners: everything merely served to separate him all the more from them. When the universal flood befell the human race, God did not abandon his faithful Noah to perish with the others. Instead, He saved him and glorified him, making him the progenitor of a new generation of men. Brethren, this shining example of Noah teaches that each one of us can please God even in the midst of sinners, if only we want to.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 9-10, The Flood and The Life of Noah and His Children After the Flood:

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## **Day 5 – November 19 (December 2 OC)**

- **5: Abraham (Constellation of Stars), Read Genesis 12:1-7;15:1-6;17:1-9**

God 'tested Abraham' (cf. Gn 22:1-14), that is, God afflicted him for his own benefit, not in order to learn what kind of man Abraham was- for He knew him, since He knows all things before they come into existence- but in order to provide him with opportunities for showing perfect faith.

-Saint Kosmas Aitolos +1779

Abraham, great Patriarch though he was, was justified by faith, and offered a strange victim (Gen 28:2), the type of the Great Sacrifice. Yet he saw not God as God, but gave Him food as a man (Gen. 18:2). He was approved because he worshipped as far as he comprehended.

-St. Gregory Nazianzen

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned

themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. (1 Peter 3:1-11)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 10

*I ... am but dust and ashes* (Genesis 18:27).

These are the words that the righteous Abraham spoke of himself. Brethren, ridiculous are those people who pride themselves on their association with worldly princes and noblemen and begin to think highly of themselves. Abraham was found worthy to converse with the Eternal and Almighty King. Nevertheless, he remained unwavering in his humility, calling himself *dust and ashes*. Who was this Abraham, that he was found worthy of so much of God's favor in his lifetime and praise after his death, from the Apostle (Galatians 3, Hebrews 11), and even from the Lord Christ Himself (Luke 16:22, John 8:39)? He was a peasant who possessed all the virtues, living always according to the Law of God, a man with a firm faith in God, a lover of justice, hospitable, compassionate, courageous, obedient, pure and humble. However, Abraham is especially glorified for his faith, a powerful faith. Abraham was one hundred years old when God told him that his wife, barren until then, would bear a son, and he believed. And even before Sarah had given birth to Isaac, God said to Abraham: *I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth* (Genesis 13:16). Abraham believed and doubted not. And when an only son was born to Abraham, God commanded him, as a test, to offer his only son as a sacrifice. Abraham was prepared to do this, had God not turned him from it at the last moment. How complete was this wonderful man's faith and obedience to God! Therefore God blessed him and made him glorious on earth and in heaven. Brethren, blessed are they who, without hesitation, believe in God and fulfill His holy commandments. The blessing of God will accompany them in both worlds.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 13, Abraham

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## **Day 6 – November 20 (December 3 OC)**

- **6: Sacrifice of Isaac (Altar), Read Genesis 22:1-18**

Did not the faithful Sarah, long ago, before her son Isaac was born, desire to give birth, even though she was sterile? She received the Lord in human form, along with two archangels; And His word to her on this occasion was: "You, Sarah, will have a child," Now, rejoicing, she Cries to the world: The barren woman gives birth to the Mother of God And the nurse of our life.

-St Romanos the Melodist - Vol. II: On the Nativity of the Virgin Mary

In two things then was Abraham victorious: that he killed his son although he did not kill him and that he believed that after Isaac died he would be raised up again and would go back down with him. For

Abraham was firmly convinced that He Who said to him, 'through Isaac shall your descendants be named,' was not lying.

-St. Ephrem the Syrian

Now pay attention, for this is a subtle point. We are going to say how Sarah's barren womb leads us by the hand, as it were, to faith in the Resurrection. How, then, does it lead us? Just as her womb, being dead, was resurrected by the Grace of God and brought forth the living body of Isaac, so also Christ, having died, was resurrected by His own power. And listen to Paul testifying that our exegesis is not forced: [the Prophet Abraham] considered not...the deadness of Sarah's womb...but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform (Romans 4:19-21). That is, God was able to bring it about that a living son be born from dead bodies. Then, leading us from that belief to this one, he adds: It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:23-24). What he is saying is this: God raised up Isaac from dead bodies; so also did He raise up His Son, Who had become dead. Do you want to learn what else barrenness symbolizes? The Church was to give birth to the multitude of the Faithful. Therefore, in order that you might not disbelieve that She who was infertile, unfruitful, and barren gave birth, one who was barren by nature preceded Her, preparing the way for Her who was voluntarily barren, and Sarah thus became a type of the Church. For, just as she, being barren, gave birth in old age, so also the Church, being barren, gave birth in the last times. Hear how Paul testifies that this is true: We are children of the free woman (Galatians 4:31). For, since Sarah, the free woman, is a type of the Church, for this reason he adds that we are children of the free woman.

-A Homily by St. John Chrysostom

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 13

*And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee (Genesis 26:24).*

Brethren, from time immemorial, the path upon which the righteous walk has always been difficult. From time immemorial, they have been hard pressed either by those who do not believe in God or by those who maintain an incorrect belief. Abel was hard pressed by his brother Cain; Noah and Lot, by a completely corrupt generation; and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, by the pagans. However, God does not forsake the righteous to walk the difficult path alone. This we also see with Isaac: *I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not.* Isaac understood these very meaningful words. By these words, God encouraged and reminded him. He was saying: "Because of Abraham, I will bless thee also; and, as I protected Abraham among the pagans, so in a like manner will I protect thee." And further: "Be faithful to Me as was Abraham thy father." Isaac followed the example of his father and did not turn away from God at any time in his life. Isaac was a farmer and a cattle-breeder as was his father; he was righteous and meek, avoiding strife with men and doing good for people. *We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee (Genesis 26:28)*, as his haters and persecutors finally had to admit. And Isaac was made worthy that God be called His God: just as God was called the God of Abraham, so later He was called the God of Isaac.

See also [Law of God](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705), Sacred History Chapter 16, The Offering of Isaac as a Sacrifice

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 7 – November 21 (December 4 OC)

- **7: Jacob's Ladder (Ladder) , Read Genesis 28:10-17**

Rejoice, O portal of God, through which the incarnate Creator passed without breaking thy seal!  
Rejoice, thou light cloud that bore Christ, the divine Rain! Rejoice, ladder and throne of heaven!  
Rejoice, honored mountain of God, fruitful and unquarried!

28th Sunday After Pentecost, Third Antiphon

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Prophet Jeremiah (Baruch 3:35-4:4)

This is our God, and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison of Him. He hath found out all the way of knowledge, and hath given it unto Jacob His servant, and to Israel His beloved. Afterward did He show himself upon earth, and conversed with men. This is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that endureth for ever: all they that keep it shall come to life; but such as leave it shall die. Turn thee, O Jacob, and take hold of it: walk in the presence of the light thereof, that thou mayest be illuminated. Give not thine honor to another, nor the things that are profitable unto thee to a strange nation. O Israel, happy are we: for things that are pleasing to God are made known unto us.

At the Vespers [of the Nativity of the Theotokos], the three Old Testament readings are "mariological" in their New Testamental interpretation. Thus, Jacob's Ladder which unites heaven and earth and the place which is named "the house of God" and the "gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:10-17) are taken, to indicate the union of God with men which is realized most fully and perfectly-both spiritually and physically-in Mary the Theotokos, Bearer of God. So also the vision of the temple with the "door 'to the East' perpetually closed and filled with the "glory of the Lord" symbolizes Mary, called in the hymns of the feast "the living temple of God filled with the divine Glory." (Ezekiel 43:27-44:4) Mary is also identified with the "house" which the Divine Wisdom has built for himself according to the reading from Proverbs 9:1-11. (From the website of The Orthodox Church in America, [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org))

Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee; he hath made ascents in his heart, in the vale of weeping, in the place which he hath appointed. Yea, for the lawgiver will give blessings; they shall go from strength to strength, the God of gods shall be seen in Sion. O Lord of hosts, hearken unto my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. (Psalm 83/84 The Psalter Ninth Hour)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 14

For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved (Genesis 32:30).

The God of Abraham and Isaac is also the God of Jacob the faithful, the obedient, the merciful and the meek. The meek beholder of God, Jacob, can be called the "one who saw God." For in truth he was meek, and he saw God and spoke with God, and he saw the angels of God and the ladder from earth to heaven. By his meekness he defeated Laban his father-in-law, and Esau his brother; by his meekness he made peace between his wives, Leah and Rachel; for his meekness he was even dear to pharaoh.

Jacob's meekness is a prefiguration of the meekness of Christ. Blessed are the meek, said the Lord, for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). These words were also realized in Jacob. He inherited the land of his fathers; his descendants were delivered from Egypt and inherited the Promised Land; through Christ the Lord, his descendant according to the flesh, he inherited the whole earth, that is, the Church of God which spread over the entire world. I have seen God face to face. Jacob saw God in the form of man but not as true man. And even this vision was only a prefiguring of the true Incarnation of

God as man. And my life is preserved. His soul was preserved from fear and from every unrighteousness. If Jacob was preserved by only seeing a vision of God, how much easier is it for us to be preserved who know God as true man and as the God-man.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 19, Jacob's Vision of the Mystical Ladder  
[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 8 – November 22 (December 5 OC)

- **8: Israel's 12 Sons (Coat of Many Colors), Read Genesis 37:3-36**

My children, desire to purify your hearts from envy and from anger with each other, lest death should overcome you, and you will be counted among the murderers. For whosoever hates his brother, kills a soul.

-Abba Anthony the Great

Remember that the Lord is in every Christian. When your neighbor comes to you, always have great respect for him, because the Lord is in him, and often expresses His will through him. 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure' (Phil. 2:13).

Therefore, do not grudge anything to your brother, but do unto him as unto the Lord; especially as you do not know in whom the Lord will come and visit you; be impartial to all, be kind to all, sincere and hospitable. Remember that sometimes God speaks even through unbelievers, or disposes their hearts towards us, as it happened in Egypt when the Lord gave Joseph favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. (Gen. 39:21).

-St. John of Kronstadt

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 15

*And Joseph left his garment in her hand, and fled outdoors* (Genesis 39:12).

The innocent and chaste Joseph endured two great and difficult temptations and overcame them: the temptation of wicked envy on the part of his blood brothers, and the temptation of adulterous passion from the Egyptian temptress. Jealousy sold him as a slave, and the passion of adultery drove the innocent one to prison. In both cases he returned good for evil: he gave food to his hungry brothers and preserved the life, throne and people of frightened Pharaoh. His brothers thought to slay him, but God saved him; the adulterous woman thought to destroy him, but God saved him. Out of slavery and imprisonment, God crowned him with glory and unlimited authority. And him whom his evil brothers could have killed with one stroke and whom Potiphar's powerful wife could have crushed in an instant, God made the unlimited master over the lives of millions of people and the only nourisher of his starving brothers. Such is the wondrous mercy of God toward the righteous. Thus does the Lord know how to save and glorify the innocent and the chaste. In the greatness of the destiny of Joseph, we see the greatness of God's mercy. There is one eye that never sleeps, my brethren. Let us cling to God and not fear anyone. Let us be innocent and chaste and not fear evil, or slander, or prison, or ridicule, or misfortune. On the contrary, let us rejoice when all of this befalls us because of our innocence and chastity; let us rejoice and await with faith the revelation of God's wonders toward us. Let us, in every storm, await the thunder of God's justice-and afterward the calm.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 20, Joseph  
[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

### **Day 9 – November 23 (December 6 OC)**

- **9: Joseph's Elevation (cows), Read Genesis 41:1-16, 25-34,36-37,39-44,56-57;42:1-8,13-15,21-26;43:1-5,11-17,26-31;45:1-16**

For an offense, whatever kind may have been given, one must not only not avenge oneself, but on the contrary must all the more forgive from the heart, even though it may resist this, and must incline the heart by conviction of the word of God: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15).

-St Seraphim of Sarov

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 21-22, Joseph in Egypt and Joseph's Meeting With His Brothers

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

### **Day 10 – November 24 (December 7 OC)**

- **10 Israel's blessing and prophecy on Judah (lion), Read Genesis 49:1-2,8-12**

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee in their hands, that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him up, because he hath known my Name.

Psalm 91

Excerpt below from Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 22, Moving of Jacob into Egypt with His Family

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

In agreement with Biblical chronology, the sale of Joseph by his brothers into Egypt, and the consequent migration there of patriarch Jacob, took place eighteen centuries before the Birth of Christ. Certain historians set this date of the moving of Jacob precisely, namely 1825 B.C. It is worthy of note that under the pharaohs of the XII dynasty, particularly during Amenemhet III, who ruled in those years, the network of irrigation was considerably widened and perfected. The level of the water in the Nile under the pharaohs of the XII dynasty was marked on the cliffs near Semne at the second cataract. In the inscription found here, and which dates to the fourteenth year of the rule of Amenemhet (i.e., 1835 B.C.) there is marked the maximum level, which was seven meters above the level of the water now.

## Day 11 – November 25 (December 8 OC)

- **11 The Infant Moses (Basket), Read Exodus 1:8-14,22;2:1-10**

From the time of Adam until that of Abraham, according to the old chronologies, 3,678 years passed, and if we add 430 years when the Israelites remained in Egypt, we have 4,108 years. Throughout this period of time Holy Scripture neither existed nor was the Sabbath considered as a feast among the people. During this period of many thousands of years the faithful and chosen people were guided to the path of salvation only by Holy Tradition, namely, from the teachings about God which they received from a living voice. Only for the duration of 1400 years - from the time of Moses until the advent of Christ - were they guided by the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament.

-Elder Cleopa of Romania, *Truth of Our Faith: A Discourse from Holy Scripture on the Teachings of True Christianity*

Moses sought to see God, and this is the instruction he receives on how he is to see Him: seeing God means following Him wherever He might lead. Anyone who does not know the way cannot travel safely without following a guide. The guide shows him the way by walking ahead of him, and the one following will not get off the right path if he keeps constantly watching the back of his guide. On the other hand, if he moves off to one side, or tries to bring himself face to face with his guide, he will be setting out on a different path from the one which his guide is showing him. Thus the Lord says to those who are being guided: You shall not see My face, or, in other words: Do not face your guide. For then you will be going in a completely opposite direction.

-St. Gregory of Nyssa, *From Glory to Glory*

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 16

*Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth* (Numbers 12:3).

A chosen man, a great wonderworker, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in his miracles, a victor in Egypt, a victor in the wilderness, the leader of a people-how could he not be proud? But if he had become proud, Moses would not have been all that he was. They become proud who think that they do their own works and not God's in this world, and who think that they work by their own power and not by God's power. But the great Moses knew that he was the doer of God's works, and that the power with which He did them was God's power and not his. That is why he did not become proud because of the awesome miracles he performed, or the great victories he obtained, or the wise laws that he gave to the people. *The Lord is my strength and my song* (Exodus 15:2), said Moses. Of the entire assembly of the Israelites in the wilderness, no one felt his own particular weakness as much as he, the greatest one of that assembly. In every task, in every place and in every moment, he expected help only from God. "What shall I do?" he cried to God, and he ceaselessly listened for God's reply and sought God's power. "Meek above all men on earth." For all the others considered themselves as being something, trusted themselves as being something, but he-nothing. He was completely absorbed in God, completely humbled before God. If the people needed to be fed and given drink, he turned to God; if it was necessary to do battle with his enemies, he raised his hands to heaven; if it was necessary to calm an uprising among the people, he cried to God. The meek, the all-meek Moses! And God rewarded his faithful servant with great glory and made him worthy to appear on Mount Tabor with Elias alongside the Lord Savior.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 24, Moses

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 12 – November 26 (December 9 OC)

- **12 Moses and the Burning Bush, Read Exodus 3:1-20**

The shadow of the law passed away when grace arrived; for, as the bush wrapped in flame did not burn, so did the Virgin give birth and yet remain a virgin. In place of the pillar of fire, the Sun of righteousness hath shone forth. Instead of Moses, Christ is come, the salvation of our souls. (Vespers for 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

I see I am not able to understand, for it passes human understanding. How is the bush that endures fire not consumed? How does the lamb endure the lion, or the swallow the eagle, and the servant his Master? In mortal womb, in a manner uncircumscribed, Mary bears my Savior as He wills it, So that every man may proclaim "A virgin gives birth, and after the birth remains a virgin."

-St Romanos the Melodist - On the Annunciation

And rejoicing and trembling at once,  
I who am straw partake of fire,  
And, strange wonder!  
I am ineffably bedewed,  
Like the bush of old  
Which burnt without being consumed.

-portion of Prayer of Preparation for Holy Communion by St. Symeon the New Theologian)

If Moses was forbidden to approach the earthly burning bush until he had loosed his sandals from off his feet (Exodus 3:5), how can you not cast away from yourself every passionate thought when you wish to see Him, Who is above all feeling and thought, and to converse with Him?

- St Nilus of Mt Sinai

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 3

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* (Genesis 1:1).

Brethren, whatever God desires to reveal to men is revealed, and whatever He does not desire to reveal remains concealed. Moses, the one who beheld God, could say nothing more about heaven than that in the beginning God created it. Having said that, he continued to describe in detail the creation of the earth. Why does Moses not speak in detail about the creation of heaven? Because God did not want to reveal any more to him, since the men of his time were neither mature enough nor capable of understanding heavenly matters beyond their senses. Only when many centuries had passed and God's New Testament had come to men, did God reveal much more of the heavenly world to His faithful and chosen ones. Only Christians began to see the heavens opened. St. John the Theologian bears witness to this: *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven* (Revelation 4:1). St. Stephen the

Protomartyr witnesses: *Behold, I see the heavens opened* (Acts 7:56). The Apostle Paul, who was *caught up to the third heaven ... and heard unspeakable words* (II Corinthians 12:2, 4), speaks of the angelic choirs, about the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, and says: *All things were created by Him, and for Him* (Colossians 1:16). His disciple, St. Dionysius, describes the celestial hierarchy in as great a detail as Moses describes the earthly world at its creation. This is how the unfathomable wisdom of God wanted it; that which God did not wish to reveal to Moses, He revealed to the apostles and their followers. What could not be told to children is told to mature men. The revelation of mysteries came through spiritual maturity. Here is a beautiful lesson for us all. Let us be diligent in seeking the truth, still more diligent in purifying our hearts, patient in waiting, and unwavering in faith that God will give us everything in due time, in the way and to the measure necessary for our salvation.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 24, Moses  
[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

### **Day 13 – November 27 (December 10 OC)**

- **13: Plagues of Egypt (Frog) – Read Exodus 6:29-7:6-;7:14-22;7:24-8:15;11:1;12:1-13,28-32**

Run from places of sin as from the plague. For when fruit is not present, we have no frequent desire to eat it.

-St John Climacus, "The Ladder of Divine Ascent"

Egypt's gods were lords of Egypt, but the Lord is the Lord of all the earth. Therefore, the gods of Egypt were not lords in any sense, but Pharaoh was too arrogant to acknowledge the true Lord. After the Lord became incarnate, His parents took Him to Egypt, where as a baby He destroyed the idols of Egypt and brought the nation to Himself. (The Orthodox Study Bible, p. 74)

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 25, Pascha (Passover) and the Exodus of the Hebrew People From Egypt (excerpt below):

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

Six hundred thousand men left with Moses, not counting women and children. Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, as Joseph himself had instructed in his last will. As soon as the Hebrews left Egypt, a pillar appeared before them in the form of a cloud in the daytime and fire at night. It guided them in their journey.

The day of the Hebrews' deliverance from bondage in Egypt forever remained in their memory. On this day the Lord established the main feast of the Old Testament, which He called **Pascha**. The word **Pascha** means "passing by," "passover," or "deliverance from misfortune" — the angel of death passed over the Hebrew dwellings. Every year on the evening of this day the Hebrews slaughtered and prepared the Paschal lamb and ate it with unleavened bread. This feast lasted for seven days.

The Paschal lamb, by whose blood the first born of the Hebrews were delivered from death, foreshadowed the Saviour Himself, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Who took upon Himself the sins of the world, Whose blood delivers all the faithful from eternal death.

The Old Testament Hebrew Pascha prefigured our New Testament Christian Pascha. In the Old Testament Pascha, death passed over the dwellings of the Hebrews. They were liberated from bondage in Egypt and given the Promised Land. Thus also in the Christian Pascha, **the Resurrection of Christ**, eternal death has **passed over** us. The Risen Christ, having freed us from the slavery of the Devil, has given us eternal life.

Christ died on the Cross on the day when the Paschal lambs were slain, and He rose immediately after the Hebrew Pascha. This is why the Church always celebrates the Resurrection of Christ after the Jewish Passover and calls the feast Pascha.

#### **Day 14 – November 28 (December 11 OC)**

- **14: Israel Passes Through the Red Sea (Parted Sea) – Read Exodus 13:20-22, 14:1-31, 15:1-19**

Once the image of the Bride who knoweth not wedlock was inscribed in the Red Sea. There it was Moses who parted the waters; and here Gabriel is the minister of a miracle. There Israel traversed the deep dry-shod; and now the Virgin giveth birth unto Christ without seed. The sea remained impassable after Israel had crossed; and the immaculate one remaineth incorrupt after the birth of Emmanuel. O God Who hast appeared as a man, Who existeth and hast existed from the beginning: Have mercy upon us! (Vespers of 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

Traversing the water as on dry land, and thereby escaping from the toils of Egypt's land, the Israelites cried aloud. Proclaiming unto our God and Redeemer, let us now sing. O Most Holy Theotokos, save us. (Ode I, Eighth Tone, Paraklesis to the Most Holy Mother of God)

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 26, The Hebrews Pass Through the Red Sea and Other Miracles

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

(excerpt below):

The Hebrews' passing through the Red Sea, whose waters separated and delivered the Hebrews from iniquity and bondage in Egypt, foreshadowed Baptism by which we are freed from the power of the Devil and slavery to sin.

#### **Day 15 – November 29 (December 12 OC)**

- **15: Water in Wilderness (Staff) – Read Exodus 15:22-16:1**

Moses, stretching out his arms on the mountain, prefigured the Cross and thus conquered Amalek. Receiving it with faith as a mighty weapon against the demons, we all cry out: “Remember us also in Thy kingdom!” (28th Sunday After Pentecost, Third Antiphon)

Of old Moses prefigured in himself an image of Christ's most pure sufferings, standing between the priests; for, forming a cross with his outstretched arms, he raised up victory, vanquishing the might of the destroyer Amalek. Wherefore, let us hymn Christ our God, for He hath been glorified! (Third Antiphon, 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

With a pillar of fire, O father, God manifestly guided thee to salvation, to the calm harbor, to the mountain of dispassion; and by thy prayer thou didst make water gush forth, didst cause the blind to see and the lame to walk aright. (Vespers of 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

Marvellous and most strange things the sovereign Master of Heaven from the first accomplished in thee, O thou all-blameless one; for perceptibly He came down from on high like rain in thy pure womb, and He thus proved thee, O Bride of God, a fountain gushing forth every kind of blessing and all good things; as well as a flood flowing with lavish benefactions of remedies unto all that ask thee for strengthening of soul and for the health of body, which thou dost grant to them through the water of God's grace. Stichera from Vespers for the Feast of the Life-Giving Spring, The Pentecostarion

If Moses had not received from God the rod of power, he would not have become god to pharaoh and would not have punished both him and Egypt. In the same way the mind, if it does not wield in its hand the power of prayer, will be unable to conquer sin and the powers of the enemy.

-St. Gregory of Sinai

For since death was by a tree, it was fitting that life and resurrection should be bestowed by a tree. Jacob, when He worshipped the top of Joseph's staff, was the first to image the Cross, and when he blessed his sons with crossed hands he made most clearly the sign of the cross. Likewise also did Moses' rod, when it smote the sea in the figure of the cross and saved Israel, while it overwhelmed Pharaoh in the depths; likewise also the hands stretched out crosswise and routing Amalek; and the bitter water made sweet by a tree, and the rock rent and pouring forth streams of water, and the rod that meant for Aaron the dignity of the high priesthood: and the serpent lifted in triumph on a tree as though it were dead, the tree bringing salvation to those who in faith saw their enemy dead, just as Christ was nailed to the tree in the flesh of sin which yet knew no sin. The mighty Moses cried, You will see your life hanging on the tree before your eyes, and Isaiah likewise, I have spread out my hands all the day unto a faithless and rebellious people. But may we who worship this obtain a part in Christ the crucified.

-St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*

See also [Law of God](#), Sacred History Chapter 26, The Hebrews Pass Through the Red Sea and Other Miracles

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

(excerpt below):

At the time of the Hebrews' journey out of Egypt into the Promised Land, the Lord worked many other miracles as well. Once the Hebrews came to a place where the water was bitter. They could not drink it and complained against Moses. The Lord showed Moses a tree. As soon as they had placed the tree in the water, the water became sweet.

This tree which took the bitterness from the water was a foreshadowing of the tree of the Cross of Christ, which took away the bitterness of life — sin.

When the Hebrews had used up all the bread they had taken from Egypt, the Lord sent them bread from Heaven — manna. It looked like little white crumbs or pieces of hail and had the taste of bread with honey. This bread was called manna, because when the Hebrews saw it for the first time, they asked each other, "*man-na*" or "What is this?" Moses answered, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you for food." Manna covered the earth in the morning around the camp of the Hebrews, for the entire time of their journeying, on every day except the Sabbath.

When the Hebrews came to the place in the desert called Rephidim, where there was no water at all, they again began to complain against Moses. At God's command Moses struck a stone cliff with his staff and water flowed from it.

Manna in the desert and water from the stone cliff, which saved the Israelites from death, foreshadowed the true food and drink for us, which is the Body and Blood of Christ, which the Lord gives to us in Holy Communion, saving us from eternal death.

In Rephidim, desert dwellers, the Amalekites, attacked them. Moses sent out Joshua, the son of Nun, with an army. Moses then went up to the nearest mountain with his brother Aaron and with Hur and began to pray, lifting both arms to Heaven, forming a cross.

Aaron noticed that when Moses held his hands up, the Hebrews prevailed over their enemies, but when he let them fall out of weariness, the Amalekites overcame the Hebrews. To ensure victory Aaron and Hur placed Moses on a stone and held his arms stretched out. Thus the Hebrews conquered the Amalekites.

Moses, when he was praying with his hands stretched forth, foreshadowed the victorious Cross of Christ, by whose power faithful Christians now conquer visible and invisible enemies.

## **Day 16 – November 30 (December 13 OC)**

- **16: The Giving of the Commandments (Stone Tablets) – Read Exodus 24:12-18**

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Epistle of Paul to the Galatians (3:23-29)

Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

O Christ God, Who once on Mount Sinai \* didst inscribe the tablets, \* now in the flesh in the city of Nazareth \* Thou hast Thyself received the book of the prophet to read of God, \* and, unrolling it, \* Thou didst teach the people \* so as to fulfill that which was written concerning Thee. (Vespers of 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

Great misery exists where life is not guided by lawful rules.

-St. Ephraim the Syrian

Begin to fulfill the commandments relating to small things, and you will come to fulfill the commandments relating to great things: small commandments everywhere lead to great ones.

-St. John of Kronstadt (My Life in Christ, Part 1; Holy Trinity Monastery; pgs. 33-34)

He that loves Me, saith the Lord, will keep My commandments; and 'this is My commandment, that you love one another.' He therefore who does not love his neighbor does not keep the commandment. Nor is he that does not keep the commandment able to love the Lord.

-St. Maximus the Confessor, Century 1

The true Lawgiver, of Whom Moses was a type, cut the tablets of human nature for Himself from our earth. It was not marriage which produced for Him His 'God-receiving' flesh, but He became the stonecutter of His own flesh, which was carved by the divine finger, for 'the Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin and the power of the Most High overshadowed her.' When this took place, our nature regained its unbroken character, becoming immortal through the letters written by His finger. The Holy Spirit is called 'finger' in many places by Scripture.

-St. Gregory of Nyssa, The Life of Moses

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 27, God Gives the Law on Mt. Sinai,

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## **Day 17 – December 1 (December 14 OC)**

- **17: Ruth (Shock of Wheat) – Read Ruth 1:1-11, 1:14-17, 1:22-2:3, 2:8-4:17**

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 18

*Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God ... naught but death shall part thee and me* (Ruth 1:16,17).

These are wonderful words, whether they are spoken by a son to a father, a daughter to a mother, or a wife to a husband. But they are three times more wonderful when a daughter-in-law says them to her mother-in-law. Blessed Ruth spoke these words to Naomi, her sorrowful mother-in-law. When both of Naomi's sons died in the land of Moab, where they lived as immigrants, the aged mother wanted to return to Bethlehem, her native land, and there to lay her bones to rest. And Naomi, noble in her grief, counseled her young daughters-in-law to remain in their own land and to remarry. Orpah remained, but Ruth said: *Naught but death shall part thee and me*. Behold a most beautiful example of how a mother-in-law can tenderly love her daughters-in-law, and again how a daughter-in-law can be wholeheartedly devoted to her mother-in-law. But in Bethlehem someone had to feed these two souls. Who would feed them? God and the diligent hands of Ruth. *Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn* (Ruth 2:2), said the daughter-in-law to the mother-in-law. And Naomi replied: *Go, my daughter* (Ruth 2:3). In a strange field, with strange reapers, she had to glean the ears of grain. That was not only toil but also shame. However, Ruth took upon herself both toil and shame out of love for her aged mother-in-law. The All-seeing God saw these two sweet souls and rejoiced. Their Creator rejoiced and rewarded and glorified them, as only He knows how to reward and glorify those who fear Him. And God, in His providence, provided that Ruth should enter the field of the wealthy Boaz to gather the gleaned ears of

grain, and Boaz saw Ruth and asked Naomi for her hand in marriage. Of this marriage was born Obed, the father of Jesse and grandfather of David the King. So it was that Ruth had humbled herself to being a beggar but God made her the ancestress of the great king (David), from whom came many kings and finally the King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 32, The Story of Ruth,

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

(excerpt below):

Naomi and Ruth, coming to the land of the Israelites, settled in the town of Bethlehem and lived on the wheat which Ruth picked up from the harvested fields. This was enough for sustenance, since it is written in the Law of God, *"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger"* (Lev. 19:9-10).

The Lord God rewarded Ruth for her attachment and respectfulness towards her mother-in-law. The Israelites had a law: if one of them died, not leaving children, then the nearest relative had to marry the widow of the person who died, and the children from this marriage were considered the dead man's children. This law was called the Levinite Law.

At this time in Bethlehem there lived a rich man, Boaz, a relative of Ruth's dead husband. According to Levinite Law, Boaz married the poor Moabite Ruth. When a son was born to them, Obed, women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, Who hath not left thee this day without a kinsmen, that his name may be famous in Israel." Naomi rejoiced and was Obed's nurse.

In fact Obed's name was glorified in Israel, for he was the father of Jesse, the father of King David.

## **Day 18 – December 2 (December 15 OC)**

- **18 Birth of Samuel and the Prayer of Anna (Horn) – Read 1Kingdoms [1 Samuel] 1:1-2:10**

“O mystery brought about on earth!" After the birth Anna prayed To our God and Maker Who knows all in advance `Thou hast heard me, O Lord, as Thou hast heard Hannah who was accused by Eli of being drunk. She promised Samuel after his birth to the Lord To become a priest. Just as formerly, Thou hast given me, too, a gift, The barren woman gives birth to the Mother of God, And the nurse of our life.

-St Romanos the Melodist - Vol. 2, On the Nativity of the Virgin

St. Cyprian sees the praying Hannah as a type of the Church pouring her heart out in prayer silently and modestly. Hannah is a type of Mary, as Samuel is a type of Christ, because as St. Cyprian states, “Samuel [was born] not according to the order of generation, but according to the mercy and promise of God.” ...The word horn had become a symbol for strength, honor and power. (Orthodox Study Bible p. 321-22; need to properly cite this)

We must boast in nothing, since nothing is our own.

-St. Cyprian

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 19

*For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord* (I Samuel 1:27-28).

Besought of God and dedicated to God, Samuel was a prophet and leader of the people of Israel. The blessed Hannah, his childless mother, besought him from God with tears and sacrifices. And she gave him, her one and only greatest blessing, to the service of the Lord from his infancy. A wise mother does not consider her children as her own, but rather as God's. They are God's both when God gives them and when He takes them, but they are mostly God's when a mother herself dedicates them to Him. God's gift is returned to Him as a reciprocal gift, for we have nothing of our own to give to Him but only that which we receive from Him. The young Samuel lived in the Temple among the iniquitous sons of Eli the high priest, and he did not become corrupt. The Lord would not reveal Himself to the sinful elders, but He appeared to this pure child: for Samuel did the will of God, *and did let none of his words fall to the ground* (I Samuel 3:19). Samuel was a judge of the people of Israel from his youth to old age and committed nothing wrong either before God or before the people. God gave him the power to prophesy and work miracles. He defeated all of God's enemies and the enemies of the people, and he anointed two kings, Saul and David. When he grew old, he called the people together and asked them if he had ever committed any violence against anyone or accepted a bribe from anyone. And the people replied with one voice: *Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand* (I Samuel 12:4). Behold, such a man was he, who was given by God and given to God as a reciprocal gift, and who grew up with the blessing of God and the blessing of his mother. Let mothers benefit from the example of the blessed Hannah; let judges and rulers of the people benefit from the example of the righteous Samuel.

## **Day 19 – December 3 (December 16 OC)**

- **19: Samuel and Eli (Candle Lamp) - Read 1Kings [1 Samuel] 3:1-20**

You were given as a precious gift to a barren womb, And offered as a fragrant sacrifice to your Lord.  
You served Him in truth and righteousness; Wherefore we honor you, O Samuel prophet of God,  
As an intercessor for our souls. (Troparion, Tone 2)

Thou didst blossom as a scion of righteousness from a barren mother, O great Prophet Samuel./ Thou didst reveal beforehand the blessings we should receive;/ from childhood thou didst serve the Lord in the priestly office./ As a prophet thou anointedst kings;/ ever remember those who acclaim thee.  
(Troparion of the Prophet Samuel, Tone 4)

Thou wast a precious gift to God before thy conception;/ thou didst serve Him from infancy like an angel/ and wast granted to foretell future events, wherefore we cry to thee: / Rejoice, O Samuel, thou Prophet of God and great high priest. (Kontakion of the Prophet Samuel, Tone 8)

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 33, Saul, First King of the Israelites,

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 20 – December 4 (December 17 OC)

- **20: David Anointed King (Sheep) - Read 1Kings [1 Samuel] 16:1-13a**

The prophet David, the forefather of God, for thy sake gave voice beforehand in psalmody concerning thee, unto Him Who in thee accomplished mighty works: the Queen stood at Thy right hand. For God Whose good pleasure it was to become incarnate of thee without father showed thee, His Mother, to be the mediatrix of life, that He might renew His image which had become corrupt through the passions; and having found the sheep which had strayed among the mountains and become lost, He taketh it upon His shoulders and bringeth it to His Father; and Christ, Who is possessed of great and rich mercy, in accordance with His will, uniteth it with the hosts of heaven, and saveth the world, O Theotokos. (Vespers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 34, King David, [http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705) (excerpt below):

For the great faith, meekness, and obedience of King David, the Lord blessed his reign and helped him in everything. He successfully waged wars with neighboring peoples.

David captured the city of Jerusalem and made it the capital of the Israelite kingdom. Instead of the dilapidated tabernacle of Moses, he placed in Jerusalem a new tabernacle and brought the Ark of the Covenant to it with solemnity. David wanted to build a permanent temple but the Lord said, *"Thou shalt not build a house to my name because thou hast carried on great wars and hast shed blood abundantly. Thy son will build a house to My name, who will be king after thee"* (I Chron. 22:6).

But at that time the Lord announced to David, *"Thy kingdom will stand forever"* (I Chron. 28:7). This meant that from his descendants would come the Saviour of the world, Christ, Who would reign forever. We know that Jesus Christ was often called the Son of David.

## Day 21 – December 5 (December 18 OC)

- **21: David and Goliath (Slingshot) – Read 1Kings [1 Samuel] 17:1-11,32-40,42-49,51-54**

Fulfilling the prophecy of David, Christ revealed His majesty to be ever-laudable and glorious, with the Father and the Spirit, and to be the One Who, as the Word, was incorporeal in the beginning, was later incarnate for our sake, was slain as a man, and arose with power as He Who loveth mankind. (Vespers of 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 33, David's Victory Over Goliath, [http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 22 – December 6 (December 19 OC)

- **22: David Psalmist (Footstool) – Read Psalm 109**

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Epistle to the Hebrews (1:10-2:3)

In the beginning, Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?

David, preceding the chorus, doth leap and dance with us, and doth declare thee, O all-pure one, the queen adorned, who doth stand in the Temple before our King and God, O most-pure one. (Entry of the Most Holy Lady Theotokos into the Temple)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 20

*And David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord* (II Samuel 12:13).

*My tears have been my food day and night* (Psalm 42:3).

King David sinned against God and repented, and God forgave him. The king's sin was great, but greater still was his repentance. He was guilty before God of two grave sins: adultery and murder. But when Nathan the prophet of God denounced him, he cried out in anguish: *I have sinned against the Lord!* Thus he confessed his sin and repented bitterly, most bitterly. Grief-stricken, he prayed to God, weeping, fasting, lying on the ground, and enduring meekly the terrible blows that God sent upon him, his house and his people because of his sins. In his penitential Psalms he says: *I am a worm and not a man* (Psalm 22:6); *Because of the sound of my groaning, my bones cling to my flesh* (Psalm 102:5); *I lie awake ... for I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping* (Psalm 102:7, 9); *My knees are grown weak through fasting* (Psalm 109:24). Here is true repentance; here is a true penitent! He did not become hardened in sin nor did he fall into despair, but, hoping in the mercy of God, he repented unceasingly. And God, Who loves the penitent, showed mercy upon this model of penitence. God forgave him and glorified him above all the kings of Israel; He gave him the great grace to compose the most beautiful penitential prayers and to prophesy the coming into the world of the Holy Savior, Who would be of his seed. Brethren, do you see how wonderful is God's mercy toward penitents? So much mercy did God have on this repentant David that He was not ashamed to take upon Himself flesh from David's seed. Blessed are they who do not become hardened in sin and who do not fall into despair because of sin. Repentance saves both the one and the other from evil.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 34, King David,

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

(excerpt below):

David wrote many sacred songs, or psalms, which he sang in prayer to God, playing on the harp or other musical instruments. In these hymns, David appealed to God, repented for his sins before God,

celebrated the greatness of God, and foretold the coming of Christ and the suffering which Christ would undergo for us. Therefore, the holy Church calls King David a **psalmist** and **prophet**.

The Psalms of David are often read and sung in church at Divine Services. The sacred book in which all these psalms or songs are found is called the **Psalter**. The Psalter is the most frequently used book of the Old Testament. Many Christian prayers are composed with words from the psalms in this book.

David reigned for forty years and died a very old man. While still alive he appointed his son Solomon as his heir. The high priest Zadok and the Prophet Nathan anointed him King. Before his death David bequeathed to Solomon his wish that the Temple of God be built without fail.

### **Day 23 – December 7 (December 20 OC)**

- **23: Solomon (Crown) – Read 3 Kingdoms [1 King] 1:32-35,38-40;2:1-4,10,12;3:5-14**

The most striking example of unquenchable thirst for happiness was Solomon, the famous King of Israel, who lived around 1000 B.C. He was so rich that all the household utensils in his palaces were made of pure gold. He was so wise that kings and famous people from far away lands came to hear him. He was so famous that his foes trembled at the mere mention of his name. He could easily satisfy any of his wishes, and it seemed that there was no pleasure that he did not possess or could not obtain. But with all of this, Solomon could not find total happiness to the end of his life. He described his many years of searching for happiness and his continual disappointments in the book of Ecclesiastes, which he began with the following phrase: *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity* (Ecc. 1:2).

-St. Innocent of Alaska, *The Way Into the Kingdom of Heaven*

When Solomon was first made king, he prefigured Christ's entrance into Jerusalem. Now, upon the throne, he foreshadows the second and glorious coming of Christ. (The Orthodox Study Bible, p. 484 need to properly site)

A wise man, whether teaching or learning, only wishes to learn or teach those things which are useful.

-St. Maximos the Confessor(First Century)

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 35, King Solomon,

[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 24 – December 8 (December 21 OC)

- **24: Elias the Prophet (Burning Rock) – Read 3 Kingdoms [1 King] selections from chapters 18 & 19**

O great Prophet Elijah,/ seer of God's mighty works,/ who didst halt the torrential rain by thy word,/ pray for us to the Lover of Mankind. (Kontakion of Prophet Elijah, Tone 2)

The river Jordan was once turned back by Elisha's mantle when Elijah was taken up,/ and the waters were divided hither and thither./ The watery path became dry for him as a type of baptism/ whereby we cross the flowing stream of life./ Christ has appeared in the Jordan to sanctify the waters. (Troparion for the Eve of the Theophany Tone 4)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 21

As Moses, by living faith and prayer, worked awesome miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness, as Joshua the son of Nun held back the course of the sun, so also God's prophet Elias shut and opened the heavens, brought down fire from heaven, and worked other mighty and awesome miracles all through faith and prayer. God gave Elias the power to work such miracles, for Elias was zealous for the glory of God and not for his own glory: *I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts* (I Kings 19:14). This man of God sought nothing for himself but sought everything for God. God was everything to him: all glory, all strength, all good. Therefore, God crowned him with immortal glory, awesome might, and treasure which does not decay and which moths do not corrupt. God did not permit Elias to die but took him to heaven as he did Enoch. St. Elias had a soul as pure as the morning dew, a body as chaste as a child's, and a heart and mind as blameless as that of an angel of God. Therefore, he was and remains a vessel of God's power. He worked wonders then and works them today.

A striking and extremely clear example of such fiery zeal for God's glory comes to us from the depths of antiquity of the Old Testament in a great Prophet of God, the flaming Elias, who grieved in soul when he saw the apostasy from God of his people, led by the impious King Ahab, who introduced into Israel the pagan worship of Baal in place of the true God.

*I have been very jealous for the Lord God Almighty*—thus did he exclaim many times, expressing his grief—*because the children of Israel have forsaken Thee: they have dug down Thine altars, and have slain Thy prophets with the sword, and I only am left, and they seek my life to take it* (3 Kings 19: 10) . And behold, this holy zeal aroused him, by the power of the grace of God which reposed on him, as a chastisement of Israel which had apostatized from God, to "close heaven" (3 Kings 17:1; 18:42-45. James 5:17-18), so that there was neither rain nor dew *for three years and six months*.

This same zeal later aroused Elias to slay the false prophets and priests of Baal, after the miraculous descent of the fire from heaven on Mt. Carmel, so that these deceivers might no longer turn the sons of Israel away from the true worship of God (3 Kings 18 :40).

By the power of the same Divine zeal, St. Elias brought down fire from heaven, which burned the captains and their fifties which had been sent by the king to seize him (4 Kings 1:9-14).

That all this was in reality holy zeal which was pleasing to God is testified to by the fact that the Holy Prophet Elias did not die the usual death of all men, but was miraculously raised up to heaven in a chariot of fire, as if signifying his authentically fiery zeal for God (4 kings 2:10-12).

-Archbishop Averky of Jordanville from Saint Elias Publications "Faith and Life"

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 37, The Prophets,  
[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## **Day 25 – December 9 (December 22 OC)**

- **25: Jonas the Prophet (Whale) – Jonas 1:1-4:11**

Entreaty do I pour forth unto the Lord, and to Him do I proclaim all my sorrows, for many woes fill my soul to repletion, and lo, my life unto hades has now drawn nigh. Like Jonah do I pray to Thee. Raise me up from corruption, O Lord, my God. (Paraklesis to the Most Holy Mother of God, Ode VI, Eighth Tone)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, September 22  
Jonah lived more than eight hundred years before Christ. It is said that he was that son of the widow of Zarephath in Sidon whom the Prophet Elias had raised from the dead. By his three-day sojourn in the belly of the whale, he prefigured the three days that Christ lay in the tomb; and, by his deliverance from the belly of the whale, he prefigured the Lord's Resurrection from the dead. Everything else concerning this wonderful prophet can be read in the Book of Jonah.

Whether they stand amid flames, as did the three Youths in Babylon, who were united with God (Daniel 3:21), or are shut up with lions (Daniel 6:16-23), or swallowed by a whale (Jonah 2:1), we should call them blessed, and they should pass their lives in joy, not being distressed over present sufferings, but rejoicing in the hope of what is in store for us in the next life.

-St. Basil the Great, Homily on Thanksgiving

In this instance, Jonah was the precursor who trained our minds. For, just as the sea monster vomited him forth after three days, not finding him to be suitable fare (for the nature of sin is the proper and suitable sustenance of death—from sin is it born, from sin does it take root, by sin is it nourished); and just, as in our case, when we swallow a stone without realizing it, and at first the action of the stomach attempts to digest it, but, finding this sustenance to be alien to it, consults further with the digestive faculty and does not decompose the stone, but destroys its strength (hence, it cannot hold down its previous sustenance, but, in exhaustion, it vomits it up together with the stone in great pain); so, also, in the case of death: it swallowed the Cornerstone and was unable to digest it, since all of its strength was sapped; for this reason, together with this Stone it threw up the rest of the food that it had inside it, when it vomited forth human nature, which, in the end, it could not hold down. This is why the barren women [of the Old Testament] were precursors, that the birthgiving [of the Virgin] might be confirmed—or, rather, not only that this birthgiving might be confirmed, but more; for, if we examine the matter with precision, we shall find that barrenness is a figure of death itself.

-A Homily by St. John Chrysostom

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 37, The Prophets,  
[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## **Day 26 – December 10 (December 23 OC)**

- **26: Tobias (Fish) – Read selections from Book of Tobias**

Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. (Psalm 141:1-2 KJV)

Virtues do not stop demons attacking us, but keep us unscathed by them.  
-Abba Evagrius the Monk (Texts on Active Life no. 49)

## **Day 27 – December 11 (December 24 OC)**

- **27: Call His Name Emmanuel (Scroll with “Emmanuel”) - Read Isaias 7:10-16;8:1-4,8-10**

"God is with us! Understand all you nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us!" This responsorial chant uses a series of verses from the messianic prophecies of Isaiah 8-9. (Part of Great Compline generally, but applying most specifically to the Nativity Vigil)

Thou didst proclaim the coming of Christ to the world,/ with a great voice like a trumpet,/ O most illustrious Prophet Isaiah./ Thou wast shown forth as a swiftly-writing scribe of things to come./ Wherefore we acclaim thee with hymns. (Troparion of the Prophet Isaiah, Tone 4)

O Prophet-Martyr Isaiah, herald of God,/ through thy gift of prophecy/ thou didst make God's Incarnation clear to all by proclaiming:/ Behold, the Virgin shall conceive in her womb. (Kontakion of the Prophet Isaiah, Tone 2)

'You will call His name Emmanuel' (Isa 7:14), that is, you will acknowledge that God has appeared in human form. For it was when the only begotten Word of God appeared like us that He became 'God with us'. He who transcends the whole of nature became as we are. Observe how in order to show that He was truly God as well as man, the prophet assigned to Him attributes that were both divine and human.

For when he says that He was given food suitable for infants, namely butter and honey, he is trying to assure us that He came to be in the flesh in reality. Then he goes on to teach that although He did indeed become flesh He was nonetheless as God superior to sin, for he adds at once: 'For before the child knows good and evil, he will reject evil and choose the good.' (Isa 7:15-16 LXX)...

The divine and supreme nature, unlike our own, but in keeping with the sublime character that is peculiar and appropriate to it, is ever inaccessible to wickedness...The phrase 'he will reject evil and choose the good' therefore signifies that it belongs to the divine nature to be irrevocably fixed on the good...even though He came into being according to the flesh through the Holy Virgin, since He was God by nature and the Word begotten by God, He was holy as God both from the womb and before it, or rather before all ages, seeing that He did not lose His own prerogatives on account of the human nature. Neither did He ignore what pertains to human nature on account of the dispensation of the Incarnation, in order that He might be believed to have become like us in reality, and might sanctify

this created nature of ours.

-St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Isaiah

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 38, The Downfall of the Israelite Kingdom,  
[http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## Day 28 – December 12 (December 25 OC)

- **28: Great Rejoicing Foretold (Throne) – Read Isaias 9:6-7; 11:1-10**

Nativity

Epistle to the Hebrews (1:1-12)

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.

O prophet Isaiah, prophesy to us: / who is the Virgin that shall conceive? / 'It is she who has come forth from the root of Judah and who was born of David the King, / glorious fruit of a holy seed.' (Beatitude Verse: 6 from the Octoechos (Tone 6), 4 from the Festal Menaion, Tone 1).

Rejoice, O portal of God, through which the incarnate Creator passed without breaking thy seal!  
Rejoice, thou light cloud that bore Christ, the divine Rain! Rejoice, ladder and throne of heaven!  
Rejoice, honored mountain of God, fruitful and unquarried! (Third Antiphon, 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

We make mention [in the Divine Liturgy] also of the Seraphim, whom Isaiah in the Holy Spirit saw standing around the throne of God, and with two of their wings veiling their face, and with two their feet, while with two they did fly, crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts' (Isaiah 6:2-3). For the reason of our reciting this confession of God, delivered down to us from the Seraphim, is this, that so we may be partakers with the hosts of the world above in their hymn of praise.

-St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures)

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 38, The Downfall of the Israelite Kingdom, [http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

### **Day 29 – December 13 (December 26 OC)**

- **29: Visit of Kings Foretold (Kings with Frankincense & Myrrh) – Read Isaias 60:1-7**

It is not ours to say how the prophets see what they see; in fact it is impossible to explain by discourse the manner of their vision. That is only known clearly by one who has received it by experiences. If it is generally impossible to describe the actions and passions of nature, it is that much more so to describe the mode of activity of the Spirit. In the meantime, if it is appropriate to have recourse to imprecise images - not in aid of clarity, but to indicate an enigma, this would appear to be the case with the prophets; if limpid water receives rays from the sun it will be illuminated, so the soul of the prophets, first purified by their own virtue, receives the gift of the Spirit and, penetrated by that brightness, acquires knowledge of the future.

– St. John Chrysostom

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 38, The Downfall of the Israelite Kingdom, [http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

### **Day 30 – December 14 (December 27 OC)**

- **30: Daniel (stone smashing statue) – Read Daniel 2:31-36,44-45**

(The above passage from Daniel is read at Nativity Great Vespers.)

When thy pure heart was purged by the Spirit,/ thou didst become a vessel of clear prophecy;/ for thou seest things afar off as though they were close at hand./ Thou didst tame the lions when thou wast cast into their den./ Therefore we honour thee, O blessed Prophet, glorious Daniel. (Kontakion of the Prophet Daniel, Tone 3)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 23

*... And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:35).*

Suffering, brethren, can weaken a man's character; however, luxury can weaken it even more. Daniel, the man of God, could not be weakened either by suffering or by luxury. In both instances he remained the same, and in both instances he was equally the messenger of the one Living God and a clairvoyant revealer of God's mysteries. He lived in royal luxury and then in a lions' den. In both instances, he remained unchanged: in royal luxury he fasted, and in the lions' den he did not hunger. The Most-high God rewarded his faithful servant with the great gift of prophecy. The main subject of his prophecies is Christ the Lord. Christ will come and will destroy idol worship throughout the whole earth. He will fill the earth with Himself like no man clothed in the flesh has ever done. He is the One to Whom will be

given *dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him* (Daniel 7:14). Daniel, the great prophet of God, prophesied the time, the exact time, of the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world.

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 38, The Downfall of the Israelite Kingdom, [http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705) (excerpt below):

The prophecy of Daniel was precisely fulfilled. After the **Babylonian kingdom**, there followed three great kingdoms: the **Median-Persian**, the **Macedonian or Greek**, and the **Roman**, each of which reigned over the Jewish people. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, appeared on earth during the Roman empire, and established His universal, eternal kingdom, the holy Church.

The **mountain**, from which was carved the stone, represents the Holy Virgin Mary, and the **stone**, Christ and His eternal kingdom.

### **Day 31 – December 15 (December 28 OC)**

- **31: Three Holy Youths (Flames) – Read Daniel 3:1-88**

The three children who were preserved unconsumed by the fire in Persia were mystically a foreshadowing of your thrice-radiant oneness of mind and your martyrdom in Christ, O athletes of the ineffable Trinity and the supernatural Unity; for as they stood up against the flame and did not rail against God, so ye also did not refuse to die when your lives were not spared by the love of Christ. As in their midst appeared a fourth Who bedewed them, so also Christ, Who is one of the Trinity, hath received them in a place of coolness. O Acepsimus, Joseph and Aithalas, elect of God, pray ye for our souls. (Aposticha, T5, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost)

Great are the achievements of faith! In the fountain of flame, as in refreshing water, the Three Holy Children rejoiced. And the Prophet Daniel proved a shepherd of lions as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls. (Troparion of the Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Children, Tone 4).

An image made with hands you would not worship, O thrice blessed three; but protected by the ineffable Essence you were glorified in your ordeal by fire. From the midst of the devouring flames you called upon God, crying: Hasten, O compassionate One, in Thy mercy come to our aid, for if Thou willest Thou canst. (Kontakion of the Three Children in Babylon, Tone 2)

O most glorious wonders! The comely Acepsimus, the minister to the martyrs, is crowned today with a wreath of hymns. He doth set before us the suffering to which he was subjected for his worship of God, and doth wound the incorporeal foe. O, what abundant gifts of grace he hath received! Through his prayers, O Christ, save Thou our souls, in that Thou art compassionate.

O most glorious wonders! Joseph hath shone forth as a star from Persia. Destroying the abomination of sorcery by the Spirit, he hath extinguished the impious worship of fire with the streams of his blood.

O, the strength by which he cast down the demons! Through his prayers, O Christ, save Thou our souls, in that Thou art compassionate.

O most glorious wonders! The steadfast Aithalas, the namesake of a champion of suffering, is shown to be an ever-blossoming garden which, cut down, doth bloom with wounds, and when slain doth but begin to live. O, the strength of nature that he endured! Through his prayers, O Christ, save Thou our souls, in that Thou art compassionate. (Vespers, 8<sup>th</sup> Tone)

In their sufferings, O Lord, \* Thy martyrs received imperishable crowns from Thee, our God; \* for, possessed of Thy might, \* they cast down their tormenters and set at naught the feeble audacity of the demons. \* By their supplications save Thou our souls. (Troparion of the holy Martyrs, Tone 4)

O servants of godliness/ you were pillars of the Church/ and humbled the proud fire-worshippers./ O much-afflicted Hierarch Akepsimus, Joseph and Aethalas,/ pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy. (Troparion of the holy Martyrs, Tone 3)

Thou didst serve the Divine Mysteries blamelessly/ and was thyself an acceptable sacrifice,/ for thou didst drink Christ's chalice./ O Akepsimus, together with thy fellow martyrs,/ pray unceasingly for us all. (Troparion of the holy Martyrs, Tone 2)

Once from out of Judea did the children go down to the land of Babylon. The fire of the furnace they trampled down, while chanting by their faith in the Trinity. O God of Our Fathers blessed art Thou. (Paraklesis of the Most Holy Mother of God, Ode VII, Eighth Tone)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 17

When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed and plundered Jerusalem, Daniel, as a boy, was carried away into slavery together with the Jewish King Jehoiachim and countless other Israelites. An account of his life, sufferings and prophecies can be found in detail in his book. Completely devoted to God, St. Daniel from his early youth received from God the gift of great discernment. His fame among the Jews in Babylon began when he denounced two lecherous and unrighteous elders, Jewish judges, and saved the chaste Susanna from an unjust death. But his fame among the Babylonians began from the day he deciphered and interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. For this, the king made him a prince at his court. When the king made a golden idol on the Plain of Dura, the Three Children refused to worship it, and for this they were cast into a fiery furnace. But an angel of God appeared in the furnace and cooled the fire so that the children walked around the furnace unharmed by the fire, singing: *Blessed art Thou, Lord God of our fathers* (Daniel 3:26). The king saw this miracle and was amazed. He then brought the children out of the furnace and bestowed upon them great honors.

In the time of King Belshazzar, when the king was eating and drinking with his guests at a banquet from consecrated vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, an invisible hand wrote three words on the wall: *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* (Daniel 5:25-28). No one was able to interpret these words except Daniel. That night, King Belshazzar was killed. Daniel was twice thrown into the lions' den because of his faith in the One, Living God, and both times the Lord saved him and he remained alive. Daniel beheld God on a throne with the heavenly hosts; saw angels; discerned the future of certain people, of kingdoms, and of the whole human race; and prophesied the time of the coming of the Savior on earth. According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, Daniel and the three children lived to old age in Babylon and were beheaded for the true Faith. When they beheaded Ananias, Azarias stretched out his cloak and caught his head; following this, Misael caught Azarias's head and Daniel caught Misael's head. An

angel of the God translated their bodies to Judea, to Mount Gebal, and placed them under a rock. According to tradition, these four God-pleasers arose at the time of the death of the Lord Christ, appeared to many and again fell asleep. Daniel is numbered among the four great prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel). He lived and prophesied five hundred years before Christ.

Paul writes, 'I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this' (1 Cor. 4:4). You see he does not exalt himself, but humbles and abases himself in every way, and that just when he had reached the summit. And the Three Children were in the fire, in the midst of the furnace, and what did they say? 'For we have sinned and transgressed by departing from You; and we have done evil in every way' (Dan. 3:29). This is what it is to have a contrite heart. St. John Chrysostom

See also Law of God, Sacred History Chapter 38, The Downfall of the Israelite Kingdom, [http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law\\_of\\_god\\_slobodskoy\\_1.htm#\\_Toc36163705](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god_slobodskoy_1.htm#_Toc36163705)

## **Day 32 – December 16 (December 29 OC)**

- **32: God's Dwelling (Ark of the Temple) – Read Exodus 40; 3 Kingdoms [1 Kings] 8**

The Temple of God, the heavenly tabernacle, doth make entry into the temple of the law, and from her hath the Light shone forth upon us who are in darkness. (Entry of the Most Holy Lady Theotokos into the Temple)

Today is the prelude of God's goodwill/ and the prophecy of the salvation of men./ The Virgin appears openly in the temple of God/ and foretells Christ to all./ So let us cry to her with loud voices:/ Rejoice, thou who art the fulfillment/ of the Creator's providence. (Troparion of the Entrance of the Mother of God, Tone 4)

The all-pure temple of the Savior, the most precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the treasurehouse of the glory of God, today enters the Temple of the Lord, bringing with her the grace which is in the divine Spirit: whom also the angels of God do celebrate in song; for she is the heavenly tabernacle. (Kontakion of the Entrance Tone 4)

Truly, O Virgin, thine Offspring set thee in the Holy of Holies as the splendid candlestick of the immaterial Light, the golden censer of the divine Ember, the jar and the staff, the divinely inscribed tablet, the holy ark, the table of the Word of life. (Third Antiphon, Dormition of the Theotokos)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, November 21

The Entry into the Temple of the Most-holy Theotokos

When the Most-holy Virgin Mary reached the age of three, her holy parents Joachim and Anna took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem to dedicate her to the service of God according to their earlier promise. It was a three-day journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem but, traveling to do a God-pleasing work, this journey was not difficult for them. Many kinsmen of Joachim and Anna gathered in Jerusalem to take part in this event, at which the invisible angels of God were also present. Leading the procession into the Temple were virgins with lighted tapers in their hands, then the Most-holy Virgin, led on one side

by her father and on the other side by her mother. The virgin was clad in vesture of royal magnificence and adornments as was befitting the "King's daughter, the Bride of God" (Psalm 45:13-15). Following them were many kinsmen and friends, all with lighted tapers. Fifteen steps led up to the Temple. Joachim and Anna lifted the Virgin onto the first step, then she ran quickly to the top herself, where she was met by the High Priest Zacharias, who was to be the father of St. John the Forerunner. Taking her by the hand, he led her not only into the Temple, but into the "Holy of Holies," the holiest of holy places, into which no one but the high priest ever entered, and only once each year, at that. St. Theophylact of Ohrid says that Zacharias "was outside himself and possessed by God" when he led the Virgin into the holiest place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain-otherwise, his action could not be explained. Mary's parents then offered sacrifice to God according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home. The Most-holy Virgin remained in the Temple and dwelt there for nine full years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often, especially Righteous Anna. When God called her parents from this world, the Most-holy Virgin was left an orphan and did not wish to leave the Temple until death or to enter into marriage. As that would have been against the Law and custom of Israel, she was given to St. Joseph, her kinsman in Nazareth, after reaching the age of twelve. Under the acceptable role of one betrothed, she could live in virginity and thus fulfill her desire and formally satisfy the Law, for it was then unknown in Israel for maidens to vow virginity to the end of their lives. The Most-holy Virgin Mary was the first of such life-vowed virgins, of the thousands and thousands of virgin men and women who would follow her in the Church of Christ.

#### HYMN OF PRAISE to Saints Joachim and Anna

The parents of the Holy Virgin  
Lead her to the holy Temple,  
And according to their promise  
They give her to the Lord.  
They lead the Temple to the Temple,  
While angels chant,  
And chant with joy  
To the young Virgin in purest attire.

The virgins accompany our Virgin,  
With hymns and tapers;  
Zacharias leads her  
To the Holy of Holies;  
And into the Holy Place he takes her,  
Where the awesome mystery is hidden.

Where the Ark of the Covenant is,  
Where the golden lampstand is,  
Where the staff and the manna are,  
Into the guarding place of all mysteries;  
There the pure Virgin is led-  
The Mystical Ark of the Living Christ.

### Day 33 – December 17 (December 30 OC)

- **33: The Prayer of Avvacum the Prophet (mountain with a large cave--the stable) – Read Avvacum [Habakkuk] 3:2-19**

Make ready, O Bethlehem: let the manger be prepared, let the cave show its welcome. The truth has come, the shadow has passed away; born of a Virgin, God has appeared to men, formed as we are and making godlike the garment He has put on. Therefore Adam is renewed with Eve, and they call out: "Thy good pleasure has appeared on earth to save our kind." (Nativity Stichera, Tone 8)

V. God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountains overshadowed by the forest.

Now the prophecy draws near to its fulfillment, which mystically said: "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, who dost prepare the cave, art not the least among the princes; for out of thee shall come forth unto me in the flesh a Governor of the Nations, and as a shepherd He shall tend His people, the new Israel." Let us all give him glory. (Nativity Stichera, Tone 3)

Today the Virgin cometh to the cave where she will give birth in an ineffable manner to the Word Who is before all ages. Rejoice, therefore, O universe, when thou hearest it heralded: Glorify Him, with the angels and the shepherds, Who chose to be seen as a newborn babe, the God Who is before all ages. (Kontakion of Preparation of Christ's Nativity, Tone 3)

### Day 34 – December 18 (December 31 OC)

- **34: The Wisdom, Word and Power of God (Open Book) - Read Baruch 3:36-38;4:1-4**

Nativity Great Vespers

Baruch (3:35-4:4)

This is our God, and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison of him. He hath found out all the way of knowledge, and hath given it unto Jacob his servant, and to Israel his beloved. Afterward did he show himself upon earth, and conversed with men. This is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that endureth for ever: all they that keep it shall come to life; but such as leave it shall die. Turn thee, O Jacob, and take hold of it: walk in the presence of the light thereof, that thou mayest be illuminated. Give not thine honor to another, nor the things that are profitable unto thee to a strange nation. O Israel, happy are we: for things that are pleasing to God are made known unto us.

He who sits at the right hand of the Father goes without shelter at the inn, that He may for us prepare many mansions in the house of His heavenly Father ... He was born, not in the house of His parents, but at the inn, by the wayside, because through the mystery of the Incarnation He is become the Way, by which He guides us to our home .

-Venerable Bede

The purpose of the advent of the Saviour, when He gave us His life-giving commandments as purifying

remedies in our passionate state, was to cleanse the soul from the damage done by the first transgression and bring it back to its original state. What medicines are for a sick body, that the commandments are for the passionate soul.

-St. Isaac of Syria

Truth is the foundation of everything that has been created. Let truth be also the foundation of all your works (both inward and outward), and especially the foundation of your prayers. Let all your life, all your works, all your thoughts, and all your desires be founded upon truth.

-St. John of Kronstadt

Men forsook God, and made carved images of men. Since therefore an image of man was falsely worshipped as God, God became truly Man, that the falsehood might be done away.

-St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures: Lecture 12 no. 15)

In Christianity truth is not a philosophical concept nor is it a theory, a teaching, or a system, but rather, it is the living theanthropic hypostasis - the historical Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Before Christ men could only conjecture about the Truth since they did not possess it. With Christ as the incarnate divine Logos the eternally complete divine Truth enters into the world. For this reason the Gospel says: "Truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

-St. Justin Popovich, Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ

## **Day 35 – December 19 (January 1 OC)**

- **35: The Birth and the Star Foretold (Star of David) – Read Micheas 5:1-3**

Nativity Great Vespers

Isaiah (7:10-16a; 8:1-4, 8b-10)

Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel. Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be from henceforth, even for ever. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

First Canon of Canticle Four, Nativity Matins

Rod of the root of Jesse, and flower that blossomed from his stem, O Christ, Thou hast sprung from the Virgin. From the Mountain overshadowed by the forest Thou hast come, made flesh from her that knew not welock, O God who art not formed from matter. Glory to Thy power, O Lord. O Christ, whom Jacob foretold in the days of old, calling Thee the Expectation of the nations, Thou hast shone forth from the tribe of Judah, and Thou hast come to plunder the strength of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria, turning their error into faith, O beautiful God. Glory to Thy power, O Lord. O Master who hast risen as a Star out of Jacob, Thou hast filled with joy the watchers of the stars, who interpreted wisely the words of Balaam, the soothsayer of old. As the first fruits of the Gentiles were they led unto Thee, and Thou has openly received them, as they brought Thee acceptable gifts. Glory to Thy power, O Lord. As dew upon the fleece hast Thou descended into the womb of the Virgin, O Christ, and as drops of rain that fall upon the earth. Ethiopia and Tarshish and the isles of Arabia, the kings of Saba, of the Medes and all the earth, fell down before Thee, O Saviour. Glory to Thy power, O Lord.

Prokeimenon of Nativity Matins: Ps 109:3-4 "Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten you...."

### **Day 36 – December 20 (January 2 OC)**

- **36: Zacharias and Elizabeth (Censer) – Read Luke 1:5-25**

Arrayed in priestly vestments, thou didst offer sacrifice according to God's law./ Thou wast a light and a seer of mysteries bearing the signs of grace within thee./ Thou wast slain in the temple of God,/ O Zacharias, Prophet of Christ./ Together with the Forerunner pray that our souls may be saved.  
(Troparion of St. Zacharias, Tone 4)

Zacharias, Prophet and Priest and father of the Forerunner,/ is preparing a feast for the faithful/ and is mixing a draught of righteousness./ Let us praise him,/ as a holy seer of the grace of God. (Kontakion of St. Zacharias, Tone 3)

### **Day 37 – December 21 (January 3 OC)**

- **37: Announcement of Good News to the Holy Virgin Mary (Angel) – Read Luke 1:24-38**

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 27  
*My soul doth magnify the Lord* (Luke 1:46).

Brethren, we have in total only a few words spoken by the Most-holy Theotokos recorded in the

Gospels. All of her words pertain to the magnification of God. She was silent before men but her soul conversed unceasingly with God. Every day and every hour, she found a new reason and incentive to magnify God. If only we were able to know and to record all her magnifications of God throughout her whole life, oh, how many books would it take! But, even by this one magnification, which she spoke before her kinswoman Elizabeth, the mother of the great Prophet and Forerunner John, every Christian can evaluate what a fragrant and God-pleasing flower was her most holy soul. This is but one wonderful canticle of the soul of the Theotokos, which has come down to us through the Gospel. However, such canticles were without number in the course of the life of the Most-blessed One. Even before she heard the Gospel from the lips of her Son, she knew how to speak with God and to glorify Him in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel. This knowledge came to her from the Holy Spirit of God, whose grace constantly poured into her like clear water into a pure vessel. Her soul magnified God with canticles throughout her whole life, and therefore God magnified her above the Cherubim and the Seraphim. Likewise, small and sinful as we are, the same Lord will magnify in His Kingdom us who magnify her, if we exert ourselves to fill this brief life with the magnification of God in our deeds, words, thoughts and prayers.

### *The Litya.* Tone One

In the sixth month the chief of the angelic hosts was sent to thee, pure Virgin, to declare unto thee the word of salvation and to greet thee, saying: "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee. Thou shalt bring forth a Son, begotten before the ages from the Father, and He shall save His people from their sins."

In the sixth month Gabriel the Archangel was sent from heaven to the city of Nazareth in Galilee to bring to the Maiden glad tidings of joy. Coming before her he cried aloud, saying: "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee. Rejoice, thou vessel containing the Nature that cannot be contained; for thy blessed womb has held Him Whom the heavens held not. Rejoice, O Lady, thou restoration of Adam and deliverance of Eve, thou joy of the world and great rejoicing of our kind."

The angel Gabriel was sent from heaven by God to the city of Nazareth in Galilee to an undefiled Virgin, to bring her glad tidings of the strange manner of her conceiving. The bodiless servant was sent to the living City and the spiritual Gate to make known to her the condescension and the coming of the Master. The captain of heaven was sent to the living Pavilion of the Glory to make ready an everlasting Dwelling for the Maker. Coming before her he cried: "Rejoice, fiery throne more glorious by far than the living creatures with four faces. Rejoice, thou seat of the King of Heaven. Rejoice, uncut mountain and precious vessel: for in thee the whole fullness of the Godhead has come to dwell bodily by the good pleasure of the everlasting Father and by the joint operation of the Holy Spirit. Rejoice, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee."

*In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tone:*

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

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

Today Gabriel announces the good tidings to her who is full of grace. "Rejoice, O unwedded maiden who hast not known marriage. Be not struck with dismay by my strange form, nor be afraid: I am an

archangel. Once the serpent beguiled Eve, but now I announce to thee the good tidings of joy: O Most Pure, thou shalt remain inviolate and yet shalt bear the Lord.”

Revealing to thee the pre-eternal counsel, Gabriel came and stood before thee, O Maiden; and greeting thee, he said: “Rejoice, thou earth that has not been sown; rejoice, thou burning bush that remains unconsumed; rejoice, thou unsearchable depth; rejoice, thou bridge that leads to heaven, and ladder raised on high that Jacob saw; rejoice, thou divine jar of manna; rejoice, thou deliverance from the curse; rejoice, thou restoration of Adam, the Lord is with thee. (Vespers of The Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos)

“Thou dost appear unto me in the form of a man,” said the undefiled Maiden to the chief of the heavenly hosts: “How then dost thou speak to me of things that pass man’s power? For thou hast said that God shall be with me, and shall take up His dwelling in my womb; and how, tell me, shall I become the spacious habitation and the holy place of Him Who rides upon the cherubim? Do not beguile me with deceit: for I have not known pleasure, I have not entered into wedlock. How then shall I bear a child?”

“When God so wishes,” said the bodiless angel, “the order of nature is overcome, and what is beyond man comes to pass. Believe that my sayings are true, O all-holy Lady, utterly without spot.” And she cried aloud, “Let it be unto me according to thy word: and I shall bear Him Who is without flesh, Who shall borrow flesh from me, that through this mingling He may lead man up from his ancient glory, for He alone has power so to do.”

Gabriel the Archangel was sent from heaven to announce to the Virgin the glad tidings of her conceiving; and coming to Nazareth he pondered in amazement on this wonder. “O how shall He Who dwelleth in the heights, Whom none can comprehend, be born of a Virgin? How shall He Whose throne is heaven and whose footstool is the earth be held in the womb of a woman? He upon Whom the six-winged seraphim and the many-eyed cherubim cannot gaze has been pleased at a single word to be made flesh of this His creature. It is the Word of God Who dwells within her. Why then do I stand here, and not say to the Maiden: “Rejoice, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee. Rejoice, O pure Virgin; rejoice, Bride unwedded. Rejoice, Mother of Life: blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”

The Theotokos heard a voice she knew not when the Archangels brought her the glad tidings of the Annunciation; and accepting the salutation with faith, she conceived Thee, the pre-eternal God. Therefore with great rejoicing we also cry unto Thee: O God, Who without change hast been made flesh from her, grant peace unto the world, and to our souls great mercy. (The Aposticha, Tone 4, Stichos 1)

Lo, our restoration is now made manifest to us: God is ineffably united to men. At the words of the Archangel error is laid low; for the Virgin receives joy, and the things of the earth have become heaven. The world is loosened from the ancient curse. Let the creation rejoice exceedingly and raise its voice to sing: O Lord, our Maker and Deliverer, glory to Thee. (The Aposticha, Tone 4, Stichos 1)

Today there come glad tidings of joy: it is the feast of the Virgin. Things below are joined to things above. Adam is renewed and Eve set free from her ancient sorrow; and the Tabernacle of the human nature that the Lord took upon Himself, making divine the substance He assumed, is consecrated as a Temple of God. O mystery! The manner of His emptying is unknown, the fashion of His conceiving is

ineffable. An angel ministers at the wonder; a virgin womb receives the Son. The Holy Spirit is sent down; the Father on high gives His consent; and so the covenant is brought to pass by common counsel. In Him and through Him are we saved, and together with Gabriel let us cry aloud unto the Virgin: “Rejoice, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee. From thee has Christ our God and our Salvation taken human nature, raising it up unto Himself. Pray to Him that our souls may be saved.” (The Aposticha, Tone 4, Stichos 1)

### **Day 38 – December 22 (January 4 OC)**

- **38: The Visitation (Mary) – Read Luke 1:39-56**

O new wonder greater than all the wonders of the past! For who hath ever known a mother to give birth without having known a man, and to bear on her arm Him Who sustaineth all creation? Yet it was the will of God to be born. O all-pure one, who bore Him in thine arms as an infant and hast maternal boldness before Him: Cease not to pray in behalf of those who honor thee, that He have compassion and save our souls. (27th Sunday After Pentecost, The Aposticha)

Rejoice, O portal of God, through which the incarnate Creator passed without breaking thy seal! Rejoice, thou light cloud that bore Christ, the divine Rain! Rejoice, ladder and throne of heaven! Rejoice, honored mountain of God, fruitful and unquarried! (28th Sunday After Pentecost, Third Antiphon)

Through the divine Spirit, by the will of the Father, without seed thou didst conceive the Son of God Who hath existed without mother from before the ages, and for our sake thou gavest birth in the flesh unto Him Who came forth from thee without father; and thou didst nurture Him on milk as a babe. Wherefore, cease not to pray that our souls be delivered from tribulations. (28th Sunday After Pentecost, The Aposticha)

No one can take God as his Father unless he takes the Church as his mother.  
-St. Cyprian of Carthage

### **Day 39 – December 23 (January 5 OC)**

- **39: Joseph the Betrothed (Joseph) – Read Matthew 1:1-25**

From the Royal Hours of the Nativity

Joseph spoke thus to the Virgin: “What is this doing, O Mary, that I see in thee? I fail to understand and am amazed, and my mind is struck with dismay. Go from my sight, therefore, with all speed. What is this doing, O Mary, that I see in thee? Instead of honor, thou hast brought me shame; instead of gladness, sorrow; instead of praise, reproof. No further shall I bear the reproach of men. I received thee from the priests of the temple, as one blameless before the Lord. And what is this that I now see?”

Tell us, Joseph, how is it that thou bringest to Bethlehem, great with child, the Maiden whom thou hast

received from the sanctuary? "I have searched the prophets," said he, "and have been warned by an angel: and I am persuaded that Mary shall give birth to God, in ways surpassing all interpretation. Magi from the east shall come to worship Him with precious gifts." O Lord, Who for our sake hast taken flesh: glory to Thee.

Come ye people, bearers of Christ, and let us behold wonders that strike and hold fast every mind with amazement: and in reverent worship let us sing praises with faith. Today a Maiden great with child comes to Bethlehem to give birth to the Lord: and choirs of angels go before her. Seeing these things Joseph, her betrothed, cried out: "What is this strange mystery in thee, O Virgin? And how shalt thou bring forth child, Calf upon whom the yoke has never come?"

Joseph was amazed as he saw what was supernatural. He understood, O Virgin, the rain upon the fleece In thy conception without seed. And he understood the bush that burned without fire and was unconsumed, And Aaron's rod, which blossomed. Indeed, thy betrothed and guardian cried out to the priests: "A virgin gives birth, and after the birth remains a virgin.

-The Kontakia of Romanos, Vol. II, On the Annunciation

#### **Day 40 – December 24 (January 6 OC)**

- **40: Journey to Bethlehem (Manger) – Read Luke 1:1-5**

Make ready, O Bethlehem: let the manger be prepared, let the cave show its welcome. The truth has come, the shadow has passed away; born of a Virgin, God has appeared to men, formed as we are and making godlike the garment He has put on. Therefore Adam is renewed with Eve, and they call out: "Thy good pleasure has appeared on earth to save our kind." (The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Stichera Tone 8)

When Mary conceived seedlessly/ she was registered in Bethlehem with the elder Joseph as being of the seed of David./ The time for birth came and there was no room in the inn;/ the cave proved a fair palace for the Queen./ Christ is born to raise up the image that of old had fallen. (Troparion for the Eve of the Nativity Tone 4)

Today the Virgin is coming to the cave/ to give birth to the eternal Word,/ Rejoice at the message, O earth;/ with the Angels and Shepherds give glory/ to Him Who was willing to be seen as a Child/ while remaining God throughout all ages. (Kontakion for the Eve Tone 3)

O Bethlehem, rejoice! Make ready, Ephratha!/ The ewe is hastening to give birth to the Great Shepherd Whom she carries in her womb./ The Godbearing Fathers rejoice at seeing Him,/ and the Shepherds praise the Virgin who suckles Him. (Kontakion Tone 1)

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Prophet Micah (5:2-4)

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for

now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

**12 Days of Nativity**  
**The Nativity according to the Flesh**  
**of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ**

**First Ode of the Canon of the Nativity**

Christ is born, glorify him. Christ is from heaven, go to meet him. Christ is an earth, be ye lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing out with gladness, all ye people. For he is glorified.  
(First Ode of the Christmas Canon)

**Day 1 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 41 – December 25/January 7 OC)**

• **41: The Birth of Jesus Christ (Infant Jesus) – Read Luke 2:6-7**

Prokeimenon of Nativity Matins: Ps 109:3-4 "Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten you...."

Ps 109:1-4 is used at various points during Nativity (e.g. verses of the third Festal Antiphon. Note also that Psalms 110 and 111 are used for the verses of the first and second antiphons, though they are less explicitly incarnational. Ps 110 is used again for the Communion Hymn. (All numbers here are according to Septuagint.)

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Kontakion of the Forefeast (Tone 3)

Today the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth ineffably to the Word Who was before the ages. \*  
Dance, O earth, at the message! \* Give glory with the angels and shepherds \* unto Him Who was willing to be gazed upon as a young child \* and is pre-eternal God.

The Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ

Troparion of the Nativity, Tone 4

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God \* hath shined upon the world the light of knowledge; \* for thereby, they that worshipped the stars \* were taught by a star \* to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, \* and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. // O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Kontakion of the Nativity, Tone 3

Today the Virgin giveth birth to Him Who is transcendent in essence; \* and the earth offereth a cave to Him Who is unapproachable. \* Angels with shepherds give glory; \* with a star the Magi do journey. // For our sake a young Child is born, Who is pre-eternal God!

He who sits at the right hand of the Father goes without shelter at the inn, that He may for us prepare many mansions in the house of His heavenly Father .... He was born, not in the house of His parents, but at the inn, by the wayside, because through the mystery of the Incarnation He is become the Way, by which He guides us to our home.

-Venerable Bede

The perfect Teacher of babes (Rom. 2:20) became a babe among babes, that He might give wisdom to the foolish. The Bread of Heaven came down on earth (John 6:32,33,50) that He might feed the hungry.

-St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures: Lecture 12 no. 1)

God's Majesty that had clothed Itself in all sorts of similitudes saw that humanity did not want to find salvation through this assistance, so He sent His Beloved One who, instead of the borrowed similitude with which God's Majesty had previously clothed Itself, clothed Himself with real limbs, as the First-born, and was mingled with humanity: He gave what belonged to Him and took what belonged to us, so that this mingling of His might give life to our dead state.

-St. Ephraim the Syrian, quoted in The Luminous Eye

The Son of God has become Son of Man in order to make us...sons of God, raising our race by grace to what He is Himself by nature, granting us birth from above through the grace of the Holy Spirit and leading us straightway to the kingdom of heaven, or rather, granting us this kingdom within us (Luke 17:21), in order that we should not merely be fed by the hope of entering it, but entering into full possession thereof should cry: our 'life is hid with Christ in God.' (Col. 3:3)."

-St. Simeon the New Theologian (Practical and Theological Precepts no. 120, Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart; Faber and Faber pg. 26)

## **Day 2 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 42 – December 26 /January 8 OC)**

- **42: The Coming of the Light of the World (Radiant Light) – Read John 1:1-5, 10-11, 14**

The Royal Hours of the Nativity,

O Christ the True Light, Who enlightenest and sanctifiest every man that cometh into the world: Let the light of Thy countenance be signed upon us, that in it we may see the Unapproachable Light, and guide our steps in the doing of Thy commandments, through the intercessions of Thy most pure Mother, and of all Thy saints.

The Aposticha, "O supreme commander, in that thou art captain and champion, princely leader of the angels, from all want and sorrow, infirmity and grievous sin do thou free them who faithfully hymn and entreat thee, O glorious one; for as thou art immaterial, thou dost manifestly behold the Immaterial One, and art illumined with the unapproachable light of the master's glory; He Who, in His love for mankind, took flesh of the Virgin for our sake, wishing to save mankind."

He that was born before the morning star of Father without mother/ is today incarnate on earth of thee without father./ A star tells the glad tidings to the Magi;/ while Angels and Shepherds praise thy seedless childbirth, O thou who art full of grace. (Kontakion of the Synaxis Tone 6)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 26

The Synaxis of the Most-holy Theotokos

On the second day of the Nativity, the Christian Church gives glory and thanksgiving to the Most-holy Theotokos, who gave birth to our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast is called "the Synaxis" because on this day all of the faithful gather to glorify her, the Most-holy Theotokos, and to solemnly

and universally celebrate a feast in her honor. In Ohrid, it has been the tradition from ancient times that, on the eve of the second day of Nativity, Vespers has been celebrated only in the Church of the Most-holy Theotokos called the Chieftain [Ėelnica]. All the clergy with the people gather together to glorify the Most-pure Mother of God.

### **Day 3 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 43 – December 27 /January 9 OC)**

- **43: The Angel's Announcement (Angel with Trumpet) – Read Luke 2:8-14**

Nativity,

Epistle to the Hebrews (1:10-2:3)

In the beginning, Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?

Think not, therefore, it is of small things thou art hearing, when thou hearest of this birth, but rouse up thy mind, and straightway tremble, being told that God hath come upon earth. For so marvellous was this, and beyond expectation, that because of these things the very angels formed a choir, and in behalf of the world offered up their praise for them, and the prophets from the first were amazed at this, that "He was seen upon earth, and conversed with men(7)." Yea, for it is far beyond all thought to hear that God the Unspeakable, (8) the Unutterable, the Incomprehensible, and He that is equal to the Father, hath passed through a virgin's womb, and hath vouchsafed to be born of a woman, and to have Abraham and David for forefathers.

-St John Chrysostom, Gospel According To St. Matthew

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, November 15

*... To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10).*

Brethren, are the angels all-knowing? They are not; for if they were all-knowing, they would be gods. God is one, brethren, and the angels are God's beautiful servants. The mystery of the Incarnation was not known to the angels before it took place. And all the other mysteries connected with the mystery of the Incarnation were also unknown to the angels until they saw them revealed in the Church. Therefore the Church is a new revelation, even for the holy angels. The Church is a new revelation of the wisdom and power of God and of His love for man. On the other hand, it is also a new revelation of man's love for God, and man's struggle. Even the angels themselves did not foresee how much God would humble Himself or how much man would be uplifted. This was shown in the Church, and through the Church it was proclaimed to the angels. The Apostle speaks of this to the Ephesians in the words quoted above: *the principalities and powers*-in other words, not even to the chiefs of the

angels was everything known beforehand. *The manifold wisdom of God* is that wisdom that was not revealed earlier, and was unknown to the angels and now, in the Church, is shown in countless forms, situations and circumstances.

#### **Day 4 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 44 – December 28/January 10 OC)**

- **44: The Shepherds Prepare (Standing Shepherd) – Read Luke 2:15**

Make glad, O ye righteous; greatly rejoice, O ye heavens; ye mountains, dance for joy. Christ is born, and like the cherubim the Virgin makes a throne, carrying at her bosom God the Word made flesh. Shepherds glorify the new-born Child, magi offer the Master gifts. Angels sing praises, saying: 'O Lord past understanding, glory to Thee!' It was the good pleasure of the Father: the Word became flesh, and the Virgin bore God made man. A star spreads abroad the tidings: the Magi worship, the shepherds stand amazed, and the creation is filled with mighty joy. O Mother of God, Virgin who hast borne the Saviour, thou hast overthrown the ancient curse of Eve. For thou hast become the Mother of Him in whom the Father was well pleased, and has carried at thy bosom God the incarnate Word. We cannot fathom this mystery: but by faith alone we all glorify it, crying with thee and saying: O Lord past all interpretation, glory to Thee! O come, let us sing the praises of the Mother of the Saviour, who after bearing child still remained Virgin. Rejoice, thou Living City of God the King, in which Christ has dwelt, bringing to pass our salvation. With Gabriel we sing thy praises; with the shepherds we glorify thee, crying: O Mother of God, intercede for our salvation with Him who took flesh from thee!

-Praises (Lauds) of Nativity Matins, Tone 4 (by Andrew of Jerusalem)

#### **Day 5 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 45 – December 29/January 11 OC)**

- **45: The Visit of Shepherds (Kneeling Shepherd) – Read Luke 2:16-20**

Nativity, Galatians (4:4-7)

Brethren, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Kontakion of the Nativity, Tone 3

Today the virgin giveth birth to Him Who is above all being, and the earth offereth a cave to Him Whom no man can approach. Angels with shepherds give glory, and magi journey with a star. For our sake is born a Young Child, the Pre-eternal God!

## Day 6 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 46 – December 30/January 12 OC)

- **46: The Star of Bethlehem (Star) – Read Matthew 2:1-2**

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Troparion of the Forefeast (Tone 4)

Make ready, O Bethlehem, \* Eden hath been opened unto all. \* Prepare, O Ephratha, \* for the Tree of life hath blossomed in the cave from the Virgin. \* For her womb proved to be a spiritual paradise wherefrom there came the Divine Plant, \* whereof eating we shall live and not die like Adam. \* Christ is born to raise the image that fell of old.

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined upon the world the light of knowledge; for thereby, they that worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee. (Troparion of Nativity, Tone 4)

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 25

*I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world* (John 16:28).

The only-begotten Son of God, brethren, begotten in eternity of the Father without a mother, was born in time of a mother without a father. That first begetting is an unfathomable mystery of the Holy Trinity in eternity, and the second is the unfathomable mystery of God's power and love for mankind in time. The greatest mystery in time corresponds to the greatest mystery in eternity. Without entering into this greatest mystery with the small taper of our understanding, let us be content, brethren, with the knowledge that our salvation had its origin not from man or from earth, but from the greatest heights of the divine invisible world. So great is God's mercy, and so great is the dignity of man, that the Son of God Himself came down from eternity into time, from heaven to earth, from the throne of glory to the shepherd's cave, solely to save mankind, to cleanse men from sin and to return them to Paradise. *I came forth from the Father*, where I had everything, *and am come into the world*, which cannot give Me anything. The Lord was born in a cave to show that the whole world is one dark cave, which He alone can illumine. The Lord was born in Bethlehem-and Bethlehem means ``the House of Bread"-to show that He is the only Bread of Life worthy of true men.

## Day 7 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 47 – December 31/January 13 OC)

- **47: The Wise Men Visit Herod (Third king with myrrh) – Read Matthew 2:3-7**

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Stichera,

Come, O ye faithful, inspired by God let us arise and behold the divine condescension from on high that is made manifest to us in Bethlehem. Cleansing our minds, let us offer through our lives virtues instead of myrrh, preparing with faith our entry into the feast of the Nativity, storing up treasure in our souls and crying: Glory in the highest to God in Trinity, whose good pleasure is now revealed to men, that in His love for mankind He may set Adam free from the ancestral curse.

Herod was struck with amazement on beholding the piety of the Magi; and overcome by wrath, he inquired closely when the Child was born. Mothers were bereft of their infants, and by an untimely death their babes were bitterly harvested. Paps grew dry and sources of milk were stopped. Great was this calamity! Therefore let us, the faithful, gathered in godliness, worship the Nativity of Christ.

## Day 8 of 12 Days (Jesse TreeDay 48 – January 1/January 14 OC)

- **48: The Naming of Jesus ("JESUS" Banner) – Read Luke 2:20-21 (optional Genesis 17:1-14)**

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Prophet Isaiah (9:6-7)

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

From the website of The Orthodox Church in America

On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised in accordance with the Old Testament Law. All male infants underwent circumcision as a sign of God's Covenant with the holy Forefather Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:10-14, Lev. 12:3).

After this ritual the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, as the Archangel Gabriel declared on the day of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos (Luke 1:31-33, 2:21). The Fathers of the Church explain that the Lord, the Creator of the Law, underwent circumcision in order to give people an example of how faithfully the divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord was circumcised so that later no one would doubt that He had truly assumed human flesh, and that His Incarnation was not merely an illusion, as certain heretics (Docetists) taught.

In the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision gave way to the Mystery of Baptism, which it prefigured (Col. 2:11-12). Accounts of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord continue in the Eastern Church right up through the fourth century. The Canon of the Feast was written by St Stephen of the St Sava Monastery (October 28 and July 13).

In addition to circumcision, which the Lord accepted as a sign of God's Covenant with mankind, He also received the Name Jesus (Savior) on the eighth day after His Nativity as an indication of His service, the work of the salvation of the world (Mt.1:21; Mark 9:38-39, 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Phil 2:9-10). These two events, the Lord's Circumcision and Naming, remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11). The very name "Christian" is a sign of mankind's entrance into a New Covenant with God.

The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Troparion (Tone 1)

Enthroned on high with the Eternal Father and Your divine Spirit,  
O Jesus, You willed to be born on earth of the unwedded handmaid, your Mother.  
Therefore You were circumcised as an eight-day old Child.  
Glory to Your most gracious counsel;  
Glory to Your dispensation;  
Glory to Your condescension, O only Lover of mankind.

The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Kontakion (Tone 3)

The Lord of all accepts to be circumcised,  
Thus, as He is good, excises the sins of mortal men.  
Today He grants the world salvation,  
While light-bearing Basil, high priest of our Creator,  
Rejoices in heaven as a divine initiate of Christ.

Thou Who art by nature God, didst without change take human form,/ O most compassionate Lord,/ and in fulfilling the Law of Thine own will didst receive circumcision in the flesh,/ to banish hades and roll away the veil of our passions./ Glory to Thy goodness; glory to Thy compassion;/ glory to Thy condescension, O Word. (Troparion of the Feast Tone 1)

Thou Who sittest with the Father/ on a fiery throne in the heights/ wast pleased to be born of a Virgin through the Divine Spirit on earth./ Wherefore Thou wast circumcised as a man on the eighth day./ Glory to Thine all-gracious will; glory to Thy providence;/ glory to Thy condescension, O only Lover of mankind. (Another Troparion of the Feast Tone 1)

In undergoing circumcision/ the Lord of all has circumcised the sins of mortal men./ On this day He gives salvation to the world./ And the Hierarch Basil, the Creator's lightbearer/ and Christ's mystic, rejoices in the highest. (Kontakion of the Feast Tone 3)

### **Day 9 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 49 – January 2/January 15 OC)**

- **49: The Visit of the Wise Men (King With Gold and Camel) – Read Matthew 2:9-12**

The Royal Hours of the Nativity, Stichera,

This is our God: and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison with Him. Born of a Virgin, He comes to dwell among men. Laid in a poor manger, the Only-begotten Son appears as mortal man and the Lord of glory is wrapped in swaddling clothes. A star guides the Magi to come and worship Him; and we sing: O Holy Trinity, save our souls.

He who holds the whole creation in the hollow of His hand today is born of the Virgin. He whom in essence none can touch is wrapped in swaddling clothes as a mortal. God who in the beginning founded the heavens lies in a manger. he who rained manna down on the people in the wilderness is fed on milk from His Mother's breast. He who is the Bridegroom of the Church calls unto Himself the Magi. The Son of the Virgin accepts their gifts.

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 25

The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshiped by shepherds and wise men (astrologers) from the east-the simplest and the wisest of this world. Even today, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Savior are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Perverted simplicity and half-learned wisdom were always the enemies of Christ's divinity and His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the east? This question was especially studied by St. Dimitri of Rostov. He claims that they were kings of certain smaller regions or individual towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were erudite in the knowledge of astronomy. This wondrous star appeared to them, which

announced the birth of the New King. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared to them nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus, i.e., at the time of His conception by the Most-holy Theotokos. They spent nine months in studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in traveling. They arrived in Bethlehem shortly after the birth of the Savior of the world. One of them was called Melchior. He was old, with long white hair and beard. He offered the Lord the gift of gold. The second was called Caspar, of ruddy face, young and beardless. He offered the Lord the gift of frankincense. The third was called Balthasar, of dark complexion and a very heavy beard. He offered the Lord the gift of myrrh. After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan, and from Milan to Cologne. It can be added that these three wise men were representatives of the three main races of men that descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Persian represented the Japhethites, the Arabian represented the Semites, and the Egyptian represented the Hamites. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshiped the Incarnate Lord and God.

### **Day 10 of 12 Days (Jesse Tree Day 50 – January 3/January 16 OC)**

- **50: The Flight to Egypt & the Slaughter of the Innocents (Sword) – Read Matthew 2:13-23**

Troparion of the Holy Innocents Tone 1

As acceptable victims and freshly picked flowers,/ as divine first fruits and newborn lambs,/ you were offered to Christ Who was born as a Child, /O most pure children./ You mocked Herod's wickedness:/ now we beseech you, unceasingly pray for our souls.

Kontakion of the Holy Innocents Tone 6

The King was born in Bethlehem./ The Magi came from the East with gifts./ They had been guided by a star./ But angry Herod mowed the children like wheat, lamenting that his power was destroyed.

Another Kontakion of the Holy Innocents Tone 4

A star sent the Magi to the newly born Child,/ and Herod sent his army in vain./ He was wanting to murder Him Who lay in the manger as an infant.

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 26

The wise men (astrologers) from the East, having worshiped the Lord in Bethlehem, were directed to return to their home another way by command of an angel. Herod, that wicked king, planned to slaughter all the children in Bethlehem, but God saw Herod's intention and sent His angel to Joseph. The angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream and commanded him to take the young Child and His Mother and flee to Egypt. Joseph did this. Taking the Divine Child and His Most-holy Mother, he traveled first to Nazareth (Luke 2:39), where he arranged his household matters, and then, taking his son James with them, went off to Egypt (Matthew 2:14). Thus the words of the prophet were fulfilled: *Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt* (Isaiah 19:1). In old Cairo today, the cave where the holy family lived can be seen. Likewise, in the village of Matarea near Cairo, the tree under which the Most-holy Theotokos rested with the Lord Jesus, as well as a miraculous spring of water under this tree, are visible. After having lived for several years in Egypt, the holy family returned to Palestine, again in response to a command of an angel of God. Thus another prophecy was fulfilled: *Out of Egypt have I called my Son* (Hosea 11:1). Herod was dead and his wicked son Archelaus-a worthy successor of him in evil-sat on his bloodstained throne. Hearing that Archelaus was reigning in

Jerusalem, Joseph returned to Galilee, to his town of Nazareth, where he settled in his own home. Herod's second son, Herod the Younger, who was somewhat less evil than his brother Archelaus, then reigned in Galilee.

A story of the Divine Christ-child: When the holy family fled before Herod's sword to Egypt, robbers leapt out on the road with the intention of stealing something. The righteous Joseph was leading the donkey, on which were some belongings and on which the Most-holy Theotokos was riding with her Son at her breast. The robbers seized the donkey to lead it away. At that moment, one of the robbers approached the Mother of God to see what she was holding next to her breast. The robber, seeing the Christ-child, was astonished at His unusual beauty and said in his astonishment: "If God were to take upon Himself the flesh of man, He would not be more beautiful than this Child!" This robber then ordered his companions to take nothing from these travelers. Filled with gratitude toward this generous robber, the Most-holy Virgin said to him: "Know that this Child will repay you with a good reward because you protected Him today." Thirty-three years later, this same thief hung on the Cross for his crimes, crucified on the right side of Christ's Cross. His name was Dismas, and the name of the thief on the left side was Gestas. Beholding Christ the Lord innocently crucified, Dismas repented for all the evil of his life. While Gestas reviled the Lord, Dismas defended Him, saying: *This man hath done nothing amiss.* (Luke 23:41). Dismas, therefore, was the wise thief to whom our Lord said: *Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise* (Luke 23:43). Thus the Lord granted Paradise to him who spared Him in childhood.

Nets and snares were fashioned, then, For the young fawn of the Virgin and Mother of God, But the trap was broken and the fawn escaped, tearing the snare.

With His mother, like a blameless deer, He fled Into Egypt, as Micah once said. O Thou Who art everywhere and Who rulest over all, where dost Thou flee?

Where dost Thou lead? In what city Shalt Thou make Thy dwelling? What house will contain Thee, what place will support Thee? No part of creation anywhere is invisible to Thy sight, But all things are laid bare to Thee, Thou art the Maker of All, O Christ. Why, then, dost Thou flee, Holy One? Because of Thee, Herod mourns as he weeps That his power will soon be destroyed.

-St. Romanos the Melodist on the Massacre of the Innocents

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, December 29  
The Fourteen Thousand Holy Children of Bethlehem

When the Magi from the east did not return to Jerusalem from Bethlehem to inform Herod about the newborn King but rather, at the angel's command, returned to their homeland another way, Herod became as enraged as a wild beast and ordered all the children two years old and under in Bethlehem and its surroundings to be killed. This frightening command of the king was carried out to the letter. His soldiers beheaded some of the children with swords, smashed others against stones, trampled others underfoot, and strangled others with their hands. And the cries and wails of the mothers rose to heaven, *Lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children* (Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew 2:18), as had been prophesied. This crime against the multitude of innocent children was carried out a year after the birth of Christ, at the time when Herod was seeking to find the Divine Child. He asked Zacharias about his son John, so that he might kill him, since he naturally thought that John was the new king. As Zacharias did not turn John over, he was slain in the Temple by order of Herod. St. Simeon the God-receiver would also have been murdered soon after the Presentation in the Temple, had he not already reposed in God. After murdering the children of Bethlehem, Herod turned against the Jewish elders who had revealed to him where the Messiah would be born. He then killed Hyrcanes, the high priest, and the seventy elders of the Sanhedrin. Thus, they who had agreed with Herod that the

new Child-king must be killed came to an evil end. After that, Herod murdered his brother, sister, wife and three sons. Finally, God's punishment came to him: he began to tremble, his legs became swollen, the lower part of his body became putrid, and worms came out of the sores; his nose became blocked and an unbearable stench emanated from him. Before his last breath, he remembered that there were many captive Jews in prison, and he ordered that they all be killed so that they would not rejoice in his death. Thus, this terrible ruler gave up his inhuman soul and handed it over to the devil for eternal possession.

### **Day 11 of 12 Days (Jesse TreeDay 51 – January 4/January 17 OC)**

- **51: Song of Zacharias - Dove carrying olive branch - Read Luke 1:57-64,67-80**

My heart is troubled within me, and the terror of death is fallen upon me. Fear and trembling are come upon me, and darkness hath covered me. And I said: Who will give me wings like a dove? And I will fly, and be at rest. (Psalm 54(55) Sixth Hour)

Do not grieve if you do not at once receive from God that which you ask. He wishes to benefit you still more by making you persist longer in your patient prayer before Him. For what can be higher than to address one's converse to God and be in communion with Him?

-St Nilus of Mt Sinai, "Early Fathers From the Philokalia," 153 Texts on Prayer

### **Day 12 of 12 Days (Jesse TreeDay 52 – January 5/January 18 OC)**

- **52: The Holy Prophet, Forerunner & Baptist John (Sandal) – Read Luke 3:1-17,21-22**

#### Troparion of the Forerunner Tone 2

The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise,/ but the Lord's testimony is enough for thee, O Forerunner/ for thou wast shown to be more wonderful than the Prophets/ since thou wast granted to baptize in the running waters/ Him whom thou didst proclaim./ Then having endured great suffering for the Truth,/ thou didst rejoice to bring, even to those in hell,/ the good tidings that God Who had appeared in the flesh/ takes away the sin of the world/ and grants us the great mercy.

#### Kontakion of the Forerunner Tone 6

Jordan turned back in fear at the sight of Thy bodily presence./ And having fulfilled his prophetic ministry, John drew back trembling./ The Angelic orders were amazed/ to see Thee in the flesh baptized in the waters./ And all in darkness were illumined and praised Thee/ Who had appeared and enlightened all creation.

#### Kontakion of the Forefeast of the Theophany Tone 4

The Lord cried to John in the running waters of Jordan:/ Be not afraid to baptize Me,/ for I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man.

For although God can change and transform diverse natures, yet because a mystery is of more benefit

to me than a miracle, I should acknowledge in the Forerunner of Christ nothing greater than the building of the growing Church, which constructed not of stony rock, but of living stones, through the conversion of our spirits rose into an habitation of God and a pediment of the Temple. Indeed, God prepared to soften the hardnesses of our minds and from stumbling blocks to erect husbandmen of religion.

-St. Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke

From the Prologue from Ohrid, by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, January 6

#### THE EPIPHANY [THEOPHANY] OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

When our Lord reached thirty years from His physical birth, He began His teaching and salvific work. He Himself signified this "beginning of the beginning" by His baptism in the Jordan river. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, "The beginning of the world - water; the beginning of the Good News - Jordan." At the time of the baptism of the Lord in water, that mystery was declared to the world: that mystery which was prophesied in the Old Testament; the mystery about which in ancient Egypt and India was only fabled; i.e., the mystery of the Divine Holy Trinity. The Father was revealed to the sense of hearing; the Spirit was revealed to the sense of sight, and in addition to these, the Son was revealed to the sense of touch. The Father uttered His witness about the Son, the Son was baptized in the water, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovered above the water. When John the Baptist witnessed and said about Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world"

(St. John 1:29), and when John immersed and baptized the Lord in the Jordan, the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation was shown. That is to say: The Lord took upon Himself the sins of mankind and died under them [immersion] and became alive again [the coming out of the water]; and we must die as the old sinful man and become alive again as cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is the Savior and this is the path of salvation. The Feast of the Epiphany [Theophany in Greek] is also called the Feast of Illumination. For us, the event in the Jordan river illuminates, by manifesting to us God as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. That is one way. And, the second: everyone of us through baptism in water is illumined by this, that we become adopted by the Father of Lights through the merits of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Your will be done, on earth as in heaven" (St. Matthew 6:10).

Blessed be John the Baptist, for he fulfilled the Good News before the arrival of the Good News! Going into the wilderness, he gave himself up completely to the will of God, both body and soul. The will of God was carried out in his body on earth as well as in the heaven of his soul. Neither hunger nor wild beasts did harm his body throughout the many years that he spent in the wilderness. Neither was his soul harmed by despair because of loneliness, nor pride because of heavenly visions. He did not seek from man either bread or knowledge. God granted him everything that was necessary for him because he gave himself up completely to the will of God.

Neither did he direct his footsteps in the wilderness nor away from the wilderness. An invisible rudder from on high steered his life. For when it was necessary for him to depart the wilderness and go out to meet the Lord, it is said: "The Word of God came to John" (St. Luke 3:2). As an innocent youth, in this manner John spoke simply about his communication with the powers of heaven: "And I did not know Him [Christ] but the One Who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, He is the One Who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God"

(St. John 1: 33-34). How tenderly and simply he speaks about heavenly things! How he is as awesome as a lion when he speaks out against the injustice of men, against Herod and Herodias! The lamb and

the lion dwell in him together. Heaven is as close to him as a mother is to her child. The will of God is as accessible and clear to him as the angels in heaven.

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