



ST OLYMPIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

POTSDAM, NEW YORK 13676

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

DIOCESE OF NY AND NJ



*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshippers.*

*Our priest is Fr. Paul Fedoroff, Priest-in-Charge.
You may reach him at priestpaulfedoroff@gmail.com or 518-573-7987 (cell)*

*Please join us for prayer and fellowship.***

**** With the new order from NY State, we are restricted to ten (10) people per service. Everyone will need to sign up for each service. Please contact Peggy Wheeler, 315-322-8425. ****

**Upcoming Services:
November 29, December 6
Hours: 9:10am Divine
Liturgy: 9:30am
Saturday, November 28,
December 5
Vespers: 5pm**

Confessions: Saturday after Vespers, Sunday before Liturgy, otherwise by appointment.

Coffee after Liturgy! **Social Distancing guidelines must be observed.

***The above services are at St. Olympia Chapel
123 Main Street
Potsdam, NY, 13676***

Fortieth Day Memorial Service

Panikhida for Metropolitan Theodosius

4:15 PM, Saturday, November 28

On Monday morning, October 19, 2020, His Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius (Lazor), former Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All-America and Canada, fell asleep in the Lord in Canonsburg, PA after an extended illness. He was the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America from 1977 until his retirement in 2002.

May his memory be eternal!



NEW TIMES for SUNDAY MORNINGS!

Hours 9:10 AM

Liturgy 9:30 AM

**Begins this Sunday, November 29
and continues through January**



Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ

*Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One,
and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One!
Angels with shepherds glorify Him!
The wise men journey with a star!
Since for our sake the Eternal God was born as a Little Child!*

The Nativity Icon: The Good News in line, form and color

By Fr. John Parker

During Catechumens class last weekend, I offered an explanation of the Icon of the Nativity. How beautiful it is that this Holy Icon tells the entire Nativity Story in one remarkable image! In the upper left, we see the three magi, those remarkable Persian Stargazers, who feature prominently in the Troparion of the Nativity: “Thy Nativity O Christ our God, has shown to the world the Light of Wisdom! For by it those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on High. O Lord, Glory to Thee!”

At left middle, a choir of angels gazes in worship, singing to the Newborn King, as recorded in Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth, Peace among men with whom He is pleased!” At bottom left, we find a curious scene, one interpretation of which is Joseph being tempted to divorce his wife: “And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly” (Matthew 1:19). At bottom right, we encounter a most human scene: Two nurse-maidens wash the newborn Jesus. What more earthly sign of the incarnation of God in the flesh can there be? Though the divine “Existing One” (Revelation 1:8, a portion of which is recited in nearly every dismissal in the daily services of the Church)—as noted in His nimbus (ο υν) —He is a human child. And what do you do with a newborn baby? Clean him up, wash him, and wrap him tightly in a blanket! The movement from that corner scene to Christ in the manger is natural—there, at center, we see Him post-washing, wrapped not just in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:7), but bound as in the traditional icon of the raising of Lazarus—already in His burial clothes.

With the ox and the ass, we now turn our attention to more specifically evangelistic details of the icon. Who are these mysterious creatures? According to one biblical interpretation, they are one clean animal, and one unclean animal, and thus represent “the whole world,” Jew and Gentile, gazing into the manger of illumination. More specifically, they are the two animals mentioned in Isaiah 1:3: “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.” There they are, two dumb creatures, the closest to the very person of the newborn Lord of All Creation, making a statement of remarkable proportions: the dumb animals recognize the Messiah, but Israel does not! In light of Isaiah 1:3, a deeper meaning of the two animals appears: The ox and the ass know their master. Do you? Do I? This is an invitation to conviction.

Moving to the middle-right of the scene, we see two shepherds, who are eagerly receiving a word from an angel who blesses them with the name of Jesus on his fingertips. The angel said to them, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12). This is truly an inspiring passage, because it is literally evangelism: “Be not afraid, for behold I ‘evangelize’ you: a great joy shall come to the people today!” The Lord Christ is born! And here is how you can find and recognize Him. Can we not bolster ourselves to be such messengers to our friends and neighbors?

Finally, a most ponderous and ponderable image, in the largest figure in the icon: the Virgin Mary. It should

not surprise us that she features prominently at center, and the closest human being to her newborn Son, the Savior of the World. But why is she not facing Him? We recall Luke 2:15ff: “When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” The Mother of God gazes not so much away from Jesus as she does towards the shepherds—who themselves have a double focus: one of receiving, one of giving. These same shepherds who heard the blessed Good News from the angels, turned and told Mary and Joseph. Heard and told, heard and told.

Finally, we make a leap to an earlier passage according to Saint Luke, and one that transports us nine months back—in the Church Year to March 25: “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ And Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be, since I have no husband?’ And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word’” (Luke 1:26-38).

This great promise to a young, holy Virgin is today fulfilled. On March 25, we celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary. On December 25, we celebrate His manifestation in the Flesh to the world. The latter—the feast at hand—is in Greek called the *Genesis* of the Lord: the beginning of Jesus! The former, the feast of nine months ago: the *Evangelism* of the Theotokos!

Good News. Glad Tidings. Born to us is the Savior of the World, Whose divine mission is to enter the darkness of the world, at the darkest time of the year, in the midst of the darkness of human sin as the Light of the World, the Peace of the World, the Savior of the World. As we sing, “The magi saw, and worshipped. The angels beheld, and sang the Glory of the Lord. Joseph remained faithful to the prompting of the Lord. Angels evangelized. Shepherds, receiving that message likewise announced what they had seen and heard.”

Can we, for whom Christ was born, do any differently?

<https://www.oca.org/reflections/misc-authors/the-nativity-icon-the-good-news-in-line-form-and-color>

