

**St Ignatios of Antioch
Melkite Greek Catholic Church
1003 Merry Street
Augusta, Georgia 30904
706 364-6219**



**Sunday of the Ancestors
17 December 2023**

Sunday of the Forefathers



Second Sunday before the Nativity

THE LITURGICAL PREPARATION for the feast of Christ's Nativity begins today with the *Sunday of the Forefathers*, which commemorates all those whose lives set the stage for the coming of the Messiah. Next week we observe the *Sunday of the Ancestors* of Christ, when we hear St Matthew's genealogy of those who were Christ's physical ancestors. From December 20 to 24 we observe a five-day "holy week" during which Christ's birth seems ever closer. As we sing during those days, "Today the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth." This fore-feast of the Nativity culminates on December 24, the *Paramony* of the feast.

Usually translated as vigil or eve, *paramony* actually refers to the *uninterrupted* nature of the Church's prayer on this day. During the day the lengthier Great Hours or Royal Hours are chanted, followed by the Typika and a more elaborate than usual Great Vespers, to which is attached the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. A special service of Great Compline with a Litia for the feast ends the day. Sometimes this leads directly into the Orthros and Divine Liturgy of December 25. In some countries of Eastern Europe it culminates with a Holy Supper prior to the Liturgy. The same cycle of uninterrupted prayer is also prescribed for the Feast of the Theophany on January 5.

Prophecies of the Messiah

The Sunday of the Forefathers intensifies the countdown to the feast of Christ's Nativity. During the Nativity Fast we celebrate the memorials of several Old Testament prophets – Obadiah (Nov. 19), Nahum (Dec. 1), Habbakuk (Dec. 2), Zepheniah (Dec. 3), Haggai (Dec. 16),

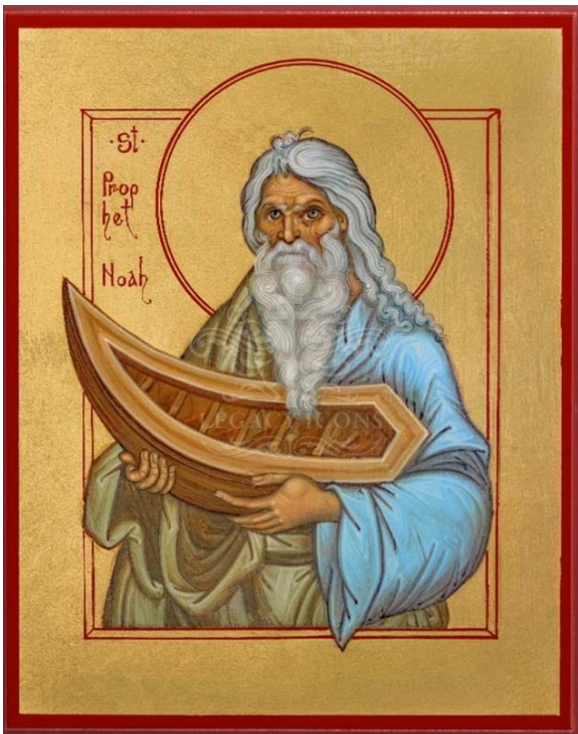
and Daniel (Dec. 17). Today we reflect on how the entire Old Testament period has been a preparation for Christ and how we are called to be ready for His ultimate triumph.

It is appropriate today to reflect on what the Scriptures tells us preceded the Incarnation. The following timeline and reading guide may be helpful in doing so. All the dates older that 1000 BC are approximate.

Before Time – The Word was with God before anything material came to be (John 1:1-4). It is through this eternal Word that our material creation comes into being.

The Pre-History of the Israelites

Before 4000 BC – The creation of our universe, the human race falls away from communion with God, life on earth as we know it begins (Genesis 1-3). Genesis actually contains two creation stories. The first (Gen 1:1-2:3) is a version of an older Babylonian myth re-edited to teach that creation is by the will of the only true God, not the result of warring gods and demons. It is cast in the form of a single week to promote the character of the Sabbath as a day of rest. Its narrative (creation begins with a burst of light followed by the creation of the planets, etc.) harmonizes with the modern Big Bang theory and subsequent discoveries.



Before 3000 BC – Sin prevails and increases, illustrated by Cain and Abel and Lamech, Noah and the Great Flood, (Gen 4-9). According to Jewish tradition, God makes a new covenant with Noah after the flood. Man is committed to observe the seven Noahide Laws prohibiting idolatry, murder, theft, sexual immorality, blasphemy, and the eating of meat with its blood (i.e. while the animal is still alive). They are also enjoined to establish courts of law.

Before 2100 BC – The rise of Middle Eastern peoples, the Tower of Babel (Gen 10, 11). Jewish tradition sees the tower as an act of arrogance aimed at world domination by a particular people which God rejects.

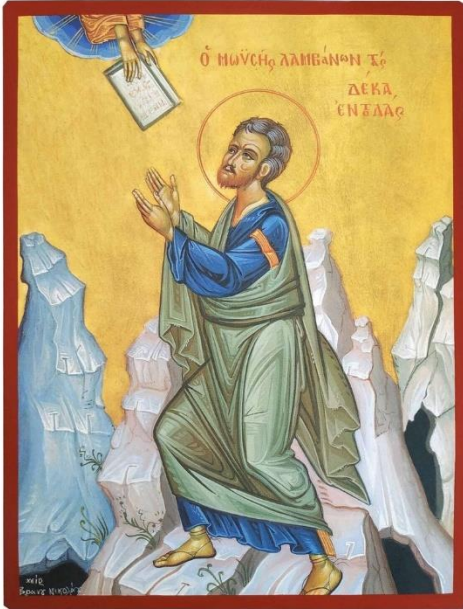
Before 1991 BC – Abraham and his sons Isaac and Jacob (Gen 12-36). God calls the Mesopotamian Abram, renames him and promises that his offspring will be as

numerous as the stars and that they will inherit the land of Canaan. He establishes circumcision as the sign of that covenant.

Israel in Egypt

1900-1806 BC - Joseph and his brothers: the descendants of Abraham in Egypt (Gen 37-50). Sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph becomes the most powerful person in Pharaoh's court when he favorably interprets the sovereign's dream, averting a famine in Egypt. He is then able to rescue his father and brothers and insure the Israelites' survival.

1800-1446 BC – The Israelites prosper, then are enslaved (Exodus 1, 2).



1450-1400 BC – The call of Moses, the exodus from Egypt, beginnings of Judaism: the Ten Commandments, the establishment of the priesthood and erection of the tabernacle (Ex 2-40, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). This is the formative experience of Israel, celebrated each year at the Passover: their liberation from slavery in Egypt and passage through the Red Sea to freedom in the Land promised by God to Abraham and his descendants.

The Promised Land

1400-1375 BC – Joshua leads the Israelites to conquer parts of the “Promised Land” (Joshua).

1375-1050 BC – Israelite tribes settle in the Promised Land. Governed by tribal elders or Judges, they extend their control of the area at the expense of the Philistines (Judges, Ruth, 1

Samuel 1-7).

The United Kingdom

1050-931 BC – The Israelites form a united kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon. This is the Golden Age of the Israelite nation. Saul was chosen by God and anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the first king. In 1007, during a losing battle with the Philistines, he fell on his sword to avoid capture.



God chooses the righteous although flawed David to succeed Saul through the prophet Samuel. God makes a covenant with him that his throne would be established forever. David would be the ancestor of the Messiah, promised to come from the house of David. The third king, Solomon, was renowned for his wisdom and power. He is considered author of the earliest Biblical Wisdom Literature. Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem but ultimately turned to the idolatry of his foreign wives (1 Sam 8-31; 1 Kings 1-11, 1 Chronicles).

Breakup of the United Kingdom

931-.860 BC – The kingdom is divided in two: north and south, Israel and Judah. Unity and monotheism give way to squabbling and pagan influences (1 Kings 12- 17, 2 Chronicles).

860-722 BC – Prophets Elijah, Elisha, Joel, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah insist on a return to monotheism, justice among the people (1 Kings 17-22; 2 Kings 1-17; Joel, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah).

722 BC – Kingdom of Israel defeated. The victorious Assyrians settle foreigners in the land. The intermingling of Israelites and pagans gives rise to the Samaritans (2 Kings 17-24).

700-590 BC – Prophets Naoum, Zepheniah, Jeremiah, Habbakuk and Ezekiel warn the Kingdom of Judah that they too have forsaken God and face destruction.

The Babylonian Captivity

588-586 BC – The Babylonians attack Jerusalem, conquer it and deport the elite to Babylon.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesy a return.

537 BC – The Persians defeat the Babylonians and allow the Jews to return to their country and rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra 1-6). Many Jews remain in Babylon and prosper there (Esther).

535-430 BC – Judea is restored, the temple scrolls become the basis of the Old Testament and Jewish life is revived (Ezra, Nehemiah) under nominal Persian rule.

Greek and Roman Rule

333 BC – Alexander the Great defeats the Persians and extends Greek rule throughout the Middle East. Jews become an important colony in Alexandria, Egypt.

250 BC – Jews in Alexandria translate the Old Testament into Greek. Others books written in Aramaic, Greek or Hebrew are included (Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and parts of Daniel) in what is called the Septuagint (LXX). The books of Maccabees, written later in Hebrew, were translated into Greek and added to the Septuagint.

175-164 BC – The Jews in the Holy Land are suppressed by the Greek ruler of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes, who defiles the temple and tries to abolish the Jewish religion. The Jews, led by the Maccabees, revolt and recover Jewish independence. (1 to 4 Maccabees), which lasts until 63 BC.

63 BC – The Romans seize control of Syria. The Jewish kingdom becomes the Roman province of Palestine.

Prophecies Written in the Old Testament

Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, begins with the stories of the creation and the fall of Adam and Eve. Genesis concludes their tragic story with these words addressed to the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head while you strike at his heel” (Gen 3:15). Many Fathers saw this as the first heralding of the Messiah’s victory over sin and death (the “proto-gospel”). Satan’s seeming defeat of Christ on the cross is but a striking of His heel while Christ’s striking at his head is His ultimate defeat of Satan. It would take countless generations – from the beginning of

humanity, through the years of both Old and New Testaments and the subsequent history of this age – for this event to be fulfilled.

The Prophets Read in the Church

At the time of the Hebrew kingdoms (the six or seven hundred years before Christ) prophets were periodically calling the people to trust in God despite the troubles of their nation. Despite conflicts with the Philistines or the Assyrians, and even in the midst of defeat and exile by the Babylonians and occupation by the Romans, the prophets encouraged the people to trust in God who would provide a deliverer.

After the death and resurrection of Christ the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit came to see these prophecies fulfilled in a decisive way by Jesus Christ, who delivers all mankind – not just the Jewish people – from its ultimate enemies, sin and death, not just foreign oppressors. Around the Old Testament prophecies of a deliverer the apostles built their preaching of the true Messiah (Anointed One) of God, Christ Jesus the Savior.

What we call the Old Testament was the Bible for the early Church as well as for Judaism and its prophecies shaped the presentation of the incarnation in the New Testament. As the following quotations show, the apostles considered these prophecies as clearly pointing to the coming of Christ:

- *His Conception* (Isaiah 7:14, cited in Mt 1:23) - “A virgin shall conceive and bear a son.”
- *The Place of His Birth* (Micah 5:2, cited in Mt 2:6) - “Bethlehem...out of you shall come a ruler...”
- *The Flight into Egypt* (Hosea 11:1, cited in Mt 2:15) - “Out of Egypt I called my son.”
- *The Slaughter of the Infants* (Jeremiah 31:15, cited in Mt 2:18) - “A voice was heard in Ramah...”
- *His home in Nazareth* (possibly Judges 13:5, cited in Mt 2:23) - “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Other prophecies were frequently cited as pointing to Jesus as the Messiah: • Numbers 24:17 - “a star shall come forth out of Jacob...”

• Isaiah 11:1 - “There shall come forth a shoot from the root of Jesse...” • Isaiah 60:5-6 “...they shall bring gold and frankincense”

While there are no verbatim quotations of prophecies in Luke’s infancy narratives, there are allusions to Old Testament scriptures throughout. In Luke 1:17, for example, John the Baptist is described by the angel as going “*before him in the spirit and power of Elijah.*” This alludes to Malachi 4:5-6: “*Behold I am sending to you Elijah the Thesbite before the great and notable day of the Lord comes.*” These allusions, and others throughout the Gospels, reflect the early Church’s belief that the entire Old Testament leads us to see

Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Let us offer up a hymn to the fathers who shone forth before the Law and under the Law, and who, by their upright will, were pleasing to the Lord and Master Who shone forth from the Virgin, for they now delight in the unfading light.

Let us honor the first Adam who was honored by the hand of the Creator, and who is the forefather of us all and who rests with all the elect in the mansions of heaven.

The Lord and God of all accepted the gifts of Abel, who offered them with a most noble soul; and when he was slain by his brother's murderous hand, He received his soul into light as that of a divine martyr.

Let us hearken to the divine sayings which declare the appearance of Christ; for, lo! He is born in a cave, of a Maiden who knew not man; for the star which appeared to the astrologers proclaims His awesome nativity.

Canon of the Forefathers, Ode 1

WE HAVE RECEIVED A VERY GENEROUS OFFER – during the season of the Christmas Fast (beginning 15 November) an anonymous parishioner has offered to match any donations we receive two to one. This is a wonderful opportunity to make your generosity to the parish count even more!

CONTRIBUTE TO OUR NON-PERISHABLE FOOD DRIVE by placing your donations in the designated area in the Parish Hall (green cardboard box) or coordinate with Ms. Barbara (bzmijewski@yahoo.com), ensuring your generous contributions make a meaningful impact to those in need.

APPARENTLY, SOME FALSE EMAILS or text messages have been going out, purportedly from Fr. Michael, asking for gift cards. These messages are fakes.

Sunday Collections

Attendance	Date	Collection
38	22 October 2023	
37	29 October 2023	
37	5 November 2023	\$459.00
39	12 November 2023	\$375.00
35	19 November 2023	\$35.00
25	26 November 2023	\$3,360.00
49	3 December 2023	\$1,605.00
39	10 December 2023	\$672.00

Divine Liturgy Intentions:

For the Living:

Bishop Francois, Fr. John Azar, Fr. James Graham, Fr. Michael Copenhagen, David Mangelsdorf, Brian Frank, Nookid Graham, Ali de la Vega, Dn. Kent & Diana Plowman, Mandie, Nick Baiad, Charlie & Kathleen Barnette, Alfonso de la Vega, Michael A Skrocki, Medical Personnel and First Responders

For the Dead:

Announcements

We are live-streaming on our Facebook page at the following days & times:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday – 8:00AM, The Third Hour

Friday – 6:00 PM Weekday Vespers

Saturday – 6:00PM Great Vespers

Sunday – 9:00AM Orthros & 10:00AM Divine Liturgy

JOIN US IN PRAYING the 3rd Hour on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8am. This is a short prayer service from our version of the Liturgy of the Hours. It lasts less than 20 minutes or so. Come join us!

PRAYER OPPORTUNITES AROUND TOWN –Most Holy Trinity parish will be hosting a Men's Holy Hour every Friday morning from 6-7am. There will also be a coffee hour and reflection time afterwards – Men from all parishes are invited to attend for whatever portion of the time they are available. For the Ladies – St. Joseph's will be hosting a Women's Holy Hour on the first Monday of each month at 7pm.

Resurrectional Troparion

(Tone 4)



The wo - men di - sci - ples of the Lord, ha - ving



learned from the an - gel the joy - ful an -



- nounce - ment of the re - sur - rec - tion, and ha - ving re -



- jec - ted the an - ces - tral sen - tence proud - ly told the A -



- pos - tles: Death is de - spoil - ed Christ God is ri -



- sen, be - stow - ing to the world great mer - cy.

Pre-Christmas Kondakion

(Nov. 26 - Dec. 24)

(Tone 2)

To - day the Vir - gin is on her way to the cave where she
will give birth to the E - ter - nal Word of God in an
in - ef - fa - ble man - ner. Re - joice there - fore,
O U - ni - verse when you hear this news, and
glo - ri - fy with the an - gels and the shep - herds,
Him who shall ap - pear as a new Child be - ing God from
all e - ter - ni - ty.

Prokimenon

Reader: Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers, and your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

All: Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers, and your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

Reader: For you are just in all you have done to us, and all your works are true and your ways right.

All: Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers, and your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

Reader: Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers,

All: And your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

Readings for the Week:

Monday:	Hebrews 8:7-13	Mark 10:46-52
Tuesday:	Hebrews 9:8-23	Mark 11:11-23
Wednesday:	Hebrews 10:1-18	Mark 11:22-26
Thursday:	Hebrews 10:35-11:7	Mark 11:27-33
Friday:	Hebrews 11:8-16	Mark 12:1-12
Saturday:	Ephesians 5:1-8	Luke 17:3-10

Saints of the Week:

Dec. 17: Holy Prophet Daniel; the three Holy Youths Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael
Dec. 18: Holy Martyr Sebastian and his companions
Dec. 19: Holy Martyr Boniface
Dec. 20: Preparation for the Nativity; commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, Bishop of Antioch
Dec. 21: Second day of the Preparation; Holy Martyr Juliana of Nicomedia
Dec. 22: Third day of the Preparation; Holy Great-martyr Anastasia
Dec. 23: Fourth day of the Preparation; the Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete
Dec. 24: Paramony of Christmas; Holy Martyr Eugenia

Word Search

X	L	F	L	R	K	R	S	U	P	P	E	R	H	U	C	Q
T	A	P	V	O	V	S	Y	A	W	H	G	I	H	F	T	S
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Angry
Blind
Chosen
Crippled
Excuse
Farm
Filled
Hedges

Highways
Invited
Lame
Lanes
Man
Married
Oxen
Parable

Poor
Ready
Room
Servant
Streets
Supper
Wife
Yoke

Parish Information:

Rt. Rev. Michael Skrocki, JCD
Pastor

abounamike@aol.com

Knights of Columbus
JFK Council

1st Wednesday of the month, 7pm
Most Holy Trinity

4th Degree Assembly
2nd Wednesday of the month, 7pm
St. Ignatios

Publicans Prayer Group
Postponed until Further Notice

New Parishioners:
Please register with Fr. Michael.

Mystery of Holy Confession
Please contact Fr. Michael to set up a convenient time.

Mystery of Christian Initiation
Expectant parents should notify Fr. Michael prior to the birth of the child. Adult converts should contact Fr. Michael so arrangements may be made for any necessary instruction and sacraments.

Mystery of Holy Crowning
Those planning to marry should notify the Fr. Michael
at least six months prior to the desired Wedding date.

Mystery of Holy Anointing
Please notify Fr. Michael when you or a family member is in need of anointing.

To report sexual abuse by clergy, parish personnel or volunteers of the Eparchy of Newton, please call the **Victim Assistance Coordinator** at 1-800-479-5910.