

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✂ December 20, 2015 ✂

Prefeast of the Nativity

The Holy Ancestors of Christ

St. Ignatius, the God-bearer of Antioch (110 AD)

St. John the Wonderworker of Kronstadt (1908)



✂ Tomorrow: Inquirer's Class – 6:30pm

✂ Nativity Week Schedule ✂

✂ Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24:

✂ 10:00am Royal Hours of the Nativity

✂ Christmas Eve Supper 3:00pm ~ Old Hall

✂ Nativity Eve Vigil – 6:00pm Compline & Matins

✂ Christmas Day, Friday, December 25:

✂ Nativity Divine Liturgy ~ 10:00am ✂

> Children's Christmas Program – Next Sunday, December 27

➤ Parish Christmas Party – Friday, Jan. 1 @ Nicholas & Macrina Wells'



To Raise us up to Heaven ~ St. John of Kronstadt

✂ God came to earth in order to raise us up to Heaven (*Akathist to our Sweetest Lord Jesus*). It would seem after this that even when living upon earth we must live as if in the Heavenly Kingdom, dwelling there in anticipation by hope. But in reality, for the greater part, the contrary is the case. Men cling with their whole being to the earth and to everything earthly. Why? Because our common enemy, the devil, endeavors with all his might to oppose the intentions of the God-Man Christ. He endeavors to do everything in opposition to what Christ did and does. Christ wishes to raise human beings to Heaven, and has given them all the means to attain this; while the devil who himself, for his pride was cast down from Heaven in the dominions of the air, wishes by every means to attach men to the earthly, sensual, transitory things, and, in order to attain this end, he employs the most powerful, more prodigious means. Christ taught us truth; the devil teaches us falsehood, and strives in every way to contradict every truth, devising various accusations against it. The devil endeavors by every means to keep human beings in error, in the enticement of the passions, in darkness of mind and heart; in pride, avarice, covetousness, envy, hatred, wicked impatience and irritation, in evil despondency, in the abominations of fornication, adultery, theft, false-witness, blasphemy, negligence, slothfulness, and sluggishness. ...Lord! Grant me a simple, kind, open, believing, loving, and generous heart, worthy of being Thy dwelling-place, O Most Gracious!

As to the fatalism of those who believe that man must be a slave to the spirit of the age, it is disproved by the experience of every Christian worthy of the name - for the Christian life is nothing if it is not a struggle against the spirit of every age for the sake of eternity.

+ Father Seraphim Rose of Platina

Wisdom of Our Holy Fathers

"What is the purpose of the Incarnation of the Divine Logos which is proclaimed throughout the Scriptures, about which we read and which yet we do not recognize? Surely it is that He has shared in what is ours so as to make us participants in what is His. For the Son of God became the Son of man in order to make us human beings sons of God, raising us up by grace to what He is by nature, giving us a new birth in the Holy Spirit and leading us directly into the kingdom of heaven. Or, rather, He gives us the grace to possess this kingdom within ourselves (cf. Luke 17:21), so that not merely do we hope to enter it but, being in full possession of it, we can affirm: 'Our life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. 3:3)."

~ **St. Symeon the New Theologian (1022)**

And from St. John of Kronstadt:

The most wise and almighty and all-powerful Artist (God) did not allow His and our enemy to entirely destroy His beautiful and grand creation, and made Himself a body like unto ours, and borrowed a soul in the womb of His Most Pure Virgin Mother. **By His Incarnation**, His teaching, miracles, sufferings, death and Resurrection, by His wonderful and most wise orderings, He again restores to the work of His hands its former and even greater beauty and glory. He again bestows upon it incorruptibility, holiness, and wonderful Divine beauty, and raises it to the highest bliss, making human nature godly and setting it with Himself on the Throne of the Godhead. Glory be to Thee, most merciful, the most wise and Almighty Artist!

Do not hasten to eat and drink, but rather hasten to perform God's service; and when performing God's service, do not think of food and drink. Think well before Whom you stand, with Whom you are conversing, to Whom you are singing praises; be wholly in God, belong wholly to Him alone, pray with all your heart, sing with all your heart, serve for your neighbor as you would serve for yourself, gladly, heartily, not with a divided heart and thoughts. Lord! help us; for without Thee we can do nothing.

"There is no happiness for me on earth except the Lord Jesus Christ, with His Father and the Holy Spirit. After God, there is nothing on earth dearer to me....The Lord is everything to me: He is the strength of my heart and the light of my intellect. He inclines my heart to everything good; He strengthens it; He also gives me good thoughts; He is my rest and my joy; He is my faith, hope and love; He is my food and drink, my raiment, my hope and love; As a mother is everything to her infant, so, likewise the Lord is everything to me, when I yield myself wholly unto Him."

"Am I not everything to you, My son, adorned with My Image? To what, then, do you cleave? In what else do you trust? Do not leave Me, the Source of living water (of life); I am the very Life. Our Life—the Lord—is single. If He is in the heart, it is enough. He alone supports our life."

"I am in God, with God, before God, under God. He is my life. My soul is in God, as a fish in water or a bird in the air, surrounded by Him upon all sides at every time; it lives in Him, it moves in Him, it rests in Him and finds freedom in Him."

- **St. John of Kronstadt (1908)**

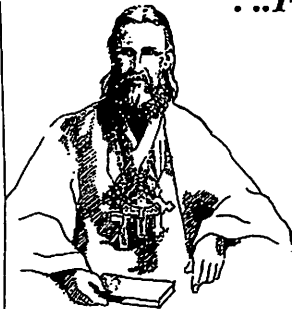
My soul, seek the Only One . . . My soul, you have no part with the earth; for you are from Heaven. You are the image of God: seek your First Image. For like strives after like. Each object finds its rest in its center and element — fish in water, fire in its upward movement — everything strives to its center. My soul, you are an immaterial spirit, immortal. . . In Him alone you will find your rest.

~ **St. Tikhon of Voronezh (1775)**

HOMILY ON THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

by Saint John of Kronstadt (+1908, remembered Dec. 20)

“...For God came down to earth that He might raise us to Heaven” (Akathist to the Theotokos, Kontakion 8)



Saint John of Kronstadt

In the words quoted above from the Akathist to the Mother of God, it is shown why God the Word came in the flesh to earth. Specifically, the reason He came is for man, who having been created for heaven, having fallen and been killed by sin, being overcome by passions, should once again be lifted up to Heaven. One perfectly justified condition

is set for this to happen — that having acknowledged his extreme waywardness and the destructive path which he has chosen, man should turn with his whole heart to God, from Whom he has fallen away. He should repent with his whole heart, reject all worldly attachments, and love God. He should live a heavenly life on earth, to the extent that this is possible, with the help of Divine Grace. This is why we now celebrate the appearance of God in the flesh.

He came in order to turn us away from the great dishonor of sin and passion under which we willfully fell. He came in order to deliver us from ruinous slavery to the Devil, from righteous condemnation and eternal death. He came to give us a new birth through the Grace of Baptism, to grant us the gift of adoption to sonship and the gift of the Holy Spirit, that by the assistance of the Holy Spirit: we might live worthy of our high calling on earth, as children of God.

The divine plan, the divine intent concerning our rebirth, our sanctification, our renewal, has taken place among us. It has taken place among many of the saved who heeded the voice of God calling them to salvation. An innumerable number of Saints have justified God's plan for the salvation of mankind through their good lives. Divine wisdom is justified of her children (Matt.11:19). The wonderful plan for our salvation is active even today among those who submit to the loving voice of God, Who calls them to salvation, to their eternal inheritance prepared for them in the heavens.

The Lord founded His Church on earth, transmitting to her His salvific mysteries. He entrusted His disciples and pastors with the task of guiding redeemed humanity to Heaven. How many people understand and accept this most wise and at the same time most simple plan for our salvation? How many deny themselves worldly attachments which darken and imprison the soul? How many people value the name Christian, the name, “child of God”? How many



think of their heavenly inheritance, prepared for them by the heavenly Father's goodness, for the sake of His Only-Begotten Son?

We can see how extremely far modern man has fallen away, completely engrossed in sensuality. Man has bound himself entirely to earthly passions and sensual pleasure. He has perverted the normal order of life given to us by the Creator. Not only does he not follow the divine plan for salvation, but he even spoils that small degree in which he is involved in the plan. Having trampled God's gifts under foot with such insanity and arrogance, man is deprived of all of God's gifts and promises.

Look attentively at modern man's life. How unnatural, not to mention Graceless it is, how un-Christian. Look how he has spoiled even simple human pleasures. He has replaced smell, taste and, to a degree, breathing itself with bitter, foul-smelling smoke. He offers it like a perpetual censer, to the devil living in his flesh. He poisons the air in his home and outside the home with the smoke. What is worse, he is permeated with the odor of smoke. He deadens his feelings, his heart, by smoking. Captured by smoking he cannot act upon the finer feelings of his heart. He coarsens his heart making it fleshly and sensual.

The stomach has also become an idol for modern man. Many do not keep the fasts at all. They consider fasting a burden. Banqueting and drunkenness have become a way of life. Money has become in all respects the contemporary idol. People will stop at no means to acquire it, no matter how dishonorable or ignoble the means might be. All man's thought, concern, entertainment, fun, desires, strivings, acquisitions, even academic pursuits, are directed earthward. In many homes there is no mention of the heavenly, of our heavenly calling, of divine teaching, of holy life. Modern man has become completely earthy — dust! God came down to the earth specifically in order to lift man to Heaven. *Adam, where art thou?* (Gen. 3:9). O Christian man, where art thou? How low have you fallen? What kind of darkness have you voluntarily fallen into? Rise up — come out into God's light, recognize your divine calling, the honor to which you are called. Return to God — cast off sensuality which kills the spirit. Begin to live according to the spirit of virtue. Put the passions of the flesh to death. Repent and be united with God so that He might lift you up to Heaven and place you together with Himself on the throne in His Kingdom.

Even though I speak of the earthly, passionate, unworthy side of people's lives I do not lose sight of the brighter side in many lives of truly virtuous Christians. However this good side represents the minority. God grant that this minority will overtake the majority! Amen.

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Orthodox Christology – Who is born in Bethlehem?

As we prepare to celebrate *“The Nativity According to the Flesh”* of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, keep in mind that the Church went through great pains and struggles to preserve the True teaching about Christ. **Christology means the Church’s doctrine concerning Christ. Who is Christ?** The Church believes that the eternal Son and Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took flesh and “became man” as we say in the **Nicene Creed**. In becoming man, the Son of God retained His complete divine nature, which He shares eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, intact and uncompromised. So we say, as the Fourth Ecumenical Council concluded, that Christ is one divine person in two natures, divine and human. And the two natures of Christ are “neither separated nor confused, neither mixed together, nor divided.”(**Chalcedon**). His taking upon Himself “that which He was not” in order to make us into what he is (a son of God) was absolutely essential for our eternal salvation. As the Fathers said, what Christ has not assumed, He has not saved. He had to take on every aspect of our human nature, “yet without sin”(Heb.4:15) in order to redeem it and unite it to God. He took upon Himself every developmental stage of human life, from embryo to full adulthood. He experienced the struggles of our finite human existence and saved our human race offering it back to God the Father. He is the New Adam, Who, by fulfilling His life on earth as the perfect human being that the old Adam had failed to be, renews our nature, corrupted by sin. Through the Incarnate Christ and His Church, each of us has the potential for unity with the Divine. In the Incarnation, Christ broke down the wall between God and man caused by our ancestral sin. As the song goes: “Peace on earth and mercy mild; God and sinners reconciled!”

Some of the great champions of Orthodox teaching on the true identity of Christ include first and foremost, **St.Athanasius the Great**, and **St.Nicholas** (First Ecumenical Council-Nicea), **St.Cyril of Alexandria** and **Pope St.Leo the Great** (Fourth Ecumenical Council - Chalcedon). They are champions because they had to fight theological battles, often at the price of great personal suffering, to defend the Truth of Jesus Christ. The belief in Christ as one divine person in two natures we hold sacred was not automatic but had to be rigorously fought for against the enemies of Truth.

There are several infamous adversaries of the Truth of Christ who were condemned as arch-heretics by the Holy Ecumenical Councils. The heretics tended to attack either Christ’s divinity or His humanity, over-emphasizing one against the other. Orthodoxy is balance. Early on there were the Docetists (led by Docetus) who simply said that the Son of God did not really take on human flesh, nor was He crucified, because that was beneath His divine dignity. Rather, the appearance of Christ was only spiritual, like that of a ghost or phantom. This gnostic belief is addressed by St.John the Theologian in 1 John 4.

The next more widely known was Arius, a priest of the Church, who plainly said Christ was not God – that Christ was a super creature, or perhaps even an incarnate archangel - but not God. He made the infamous statement that he could not fall down, like the Wise Men, and worship a baby in dirty diapers. His heresy provoked the convening of the First Ecumenical Council (325) by St.Constantine. The Council developed our Nicene Creed which states that Christ is of “one essence” or “consubstantial” (Gr. **homousios**- “*of the same essence*”) with the Father. (A variation on Arius’ heresy taught that Christ was not truly, fully God, but that he was “like God” –**homoiousios**. One Greek letter, an iota-Greek letter “i”, makes an entirely different definition of Christ, undermining His divinity. This is why it is said that the Holy Fathers would not change “one iota” of the Holy Faith). Arius was condemned by that Council, at which he had a hearing. However, soon after, Constantine relented and thought to re-instate him in the priesthood and give a second hearing to his teaching. It is fearful irony, that on the day of Arius’ appointment to see the Emperor, Arius became violently ill in his bowels and ran to a public toilet where he died lying in his own blood and filth.

Appolinarius was one of the best-educated men of his time. He became bishop of Laodicea in 362. He taught that Christ did not have a human soul. Appolinarius composed hymns designed to spread his heresy. He and his teaching were condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (381).

Nestorius was Ecumenical Patriarch. He taught erroneously that Christ was *not* God incarnate, but that divinity attached itself to him (“adopted” him) later in His life. Thus, he refused to call Mary “**Theotokos**”(Mother of God) and would call her only “Christotokos”(Mother of Christ). His heresy of Nestorianism was condemned at the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus (431). Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius’ teacher, was condemned later at the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553).

Eutyches founded the Monophysite heresy. He was an archimandrite in Constantinople. The Monophysites, being vehemently opposed to Nestorianism, desired to defend the honor of Christ’s divinity but at the expense

of His humanity. They say Christ has but one divine nature (Gr. "mono"- *one*, "physis" -*nature*) and that His humanity is submerged in the unity with His divine nature. Basically, Monophysites say that Christ primarily inherits a human body, but not a full complete human nature from the Blessed Virgin. Orthodoxy says that if Christ did not assume a genuine and complete humanity from the Theotokos, then our humanity is *not saved*. Then Christ does not save us. Monophysites claim to be faithful to the Orthodox teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria, but they are *not*. Eutyches, along with fellow heretic Dioscoros, Patriarch of Alexandria, were deposed and their heresy condemned by the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451).

The Monophysite heresy did not disappear. It had many adherents, many of whom also saw a political opportunity within the theological controversy (not unlike later Protestant reformers), as a chance to break from under the Emperor of Constantinople. Around the year 500, several Monophysite monks seized control of some monasteries in Gaza and Palestine. They initially did not have a leader or "head", so they were referred to as the "anakephalai" or "headless ones". We even remember them this way in the Orthodox liturgical texts which commemorate the Holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils in July and October. This extremist sect came to be led by Severus, a Gazan monk, and it became known as the Severian heresy. Severus moved to Constantinople where he won over the Emperor, creating great troubles for the Church. He was given the seat of the Patriarch of Antioch causing much confusion and turmoil in Syria and Palestine. St. Savas the Sanctified (from whose St. Savas Monastery the Russian Church takes its typikon) led the Palestinian monks in a courageous defense of Orthodoxy. Severus was eventually deposed and then later rehabilitated by Emperor Justinian, who had Monophysite sympathies. It took a local council of the Church to condemn Severus, finally.

Monophysitism persists to this day. The *Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian Churches*, though they use the title "*Orthodox*" are Monophysite in their belief about Christ and *not* part of the family of the canonical Orthodox Churches since the fifth century. *These groups have never repented of their heresy*. They do not accept the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, nor the subsequent three Holy Ecumenical Councils. They consider the arch-heretics Eutyches, Dioscoros and Severus as their *Fathers*. Though we now hear from modern Orthodox theologians that it was all simply a big *misunderstanding* of terms (As if we better understand the issues at stake than did the Holy Fathers!), *do not believe it!* The Monophysites have not moved from their position one iota. The point again is that Orthodoxy did not just drop from the sky one day. It had to be wrestled over and defended repeatedly by many courageous right-believing Christian confessors. Each of us humble members is called to be a defender of the Holy Orthodox Faith. Remember that heretics came out of the ranks of the Church itself. They generally were very talented and intelligent individuals, but they exhibited huge pride in their insistence on trying to push the Church in directions they thought best, flaunting the received Tradition. It is a false assumption to think that such people do not exist in the Church today, waiting for their moment, and that all things are now settled in the Church and that we can relax our vigilance over the Orthodox inheritance. We may be called on again to defend the Faith at any time, and even sooner than we think. For now, we can do our part by being a faithful son of the Church and remembering to worship the God-Man, Jesus Christ, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith, in the Orthodox manner on the Feast of His Holy Nativity in the Flesh, December 25.

St Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium.

A fellow-countryman and friend of St Basil the Great and other great saints of the fourth century, Amphilochius early forsook the bustle of the world and withdrew to a cave where, as a solitary, he lived in asceticism for forty years. The episcopal throne in Iconium then fell empty, and Amphilochius was chosen in a wonderful way and consecrated as Bishop of Iconium. He was a marvellous shepherd and a great defender of the purity of the Orthodox faith, and took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381. He fought zealously against Macedonius, and against the Arians and the Eunomians. He personally begged Theodosius the Great to drive the Arians out of every city in the Empire, but the Emperor did not comply with his request. After a few days, Amphilochius came before the Emperor again. When the bishop was taken into the presence-chamber, the Emperor was sitting on his throne with his

son Arcadius, whom he had taken as co-Emperor, sitting at his right hand. Entering the room, Amphilochius did reverence to Theodosius, but ignored Arcadius as though he were not there. Infuriated by this, the Emperor Theodosius commanded that Amphilochius be instantly driven from court. The saint then said to the Emperor: 'Do you see, O Emperor, how you do not tolerate a slight paid to your son? In the same way, God the Father does not tolerate dishonour paid to His Son, turning with loathing from those who blaspheme against Him, and being angered at that accursed Arian heresy.' Hearing this, the Emperor understood the reason for Amphilochius's seeming disrespect towards his son, and marvelled at his wisdom and daring. Among many other works, Amphilochius wrote several books on the Faith. He entered into rest in 395 in great old age, and went to immortal life.

THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM

Church of the Nativity is the oldest church in the Holy Land still in use, commemorating the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Since St. Helena is believed to have built the Church of the Nativity, there are others who believe that it was the Emperor Constantine who ordered the construction of monumental churches to honor the three principal events of Jesus' life.

The construction began in 326 AD, and with the aid of the locals' traditions who believed that the cave in which Jesus Christ (pbuh) was born was at the end of the village, the architects were able to construct the shape of the cave according to architectural and devotional requirements. The cave was encased by an octagonal structure forming the sanctuary of the basilica, which stretched away to the west in five aisles divided by four rows of monolithic columns. The Church was rich with mosaics, frescoes, marbles, and a silver manger replacing the original clay manger.

The present Church was built during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor, Justinian. In 529, the Samaritans revolted, and the Church of the Nativity was badly damaged. The Patriarch of Jerusalem sent St. Sabas to Justinian for help, and the architect sent by the Emperor demolished the church and built the current one. New soil covered the mosaic floor built in 326, and a new pavement was laid at a higher level. When the Crusaders came in the 12th Century, they built a cloister and monastery around the north side of the Church.

The Manger is situated on the north side of the Grotto, and opposite the Manger, an Alter is dedicated to the Wise Men who came to Bethlehem from the East under the guidance of a star bearing gifts to Baby Jesus.

✘ "He comes not as a fierce man of war, threatening all things living with death, but as a newly born babe, bringing the hope of rebirth and life into the entire realm of death; He comes--but the land of destruction does not meet, does not embrace, does not praise, does not even see its Saviour, and does not hear the Word of God keeping silence in a manger. Virtually in vain does the glory which Jesus Christ had with God the Father before the world was (John 17:5) on the lips of the angels, follow Him descending into the world and pursuing Him, attain even unto the earth."
St. Philaret of Moscow (1867)

✘ "I too will proclaim the greatness of this day: the Immaterial become incarnate, the Word is made flesh, the invisible makes itself seen, the intangible can be touched, the timeless has a beginning, the Son of God becomes the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, always the same, yesterday, today and forever. . . This is the solemnity we are celebrating today: the arrival of God among us, so that we might go to God, or more precisely, return to Him. . . Revere the Nativity which releases you from the chains of evil. Honor this tiny Bethlehem which restores Paradise to you. Venerate this crib; because of it you who were deprived of meaning (logos) are fed by the divine Meaning, the divine Logos Himself." -St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration 38, for the Nativity

✘ "We celebrate the holy and life-giving and bloodless sacrifice in the churches, not in the belief that the offering is the body of an ordinary man like ourselves, and similarly with the precious blood, but instead accepting that it has become the very own body and blood of the Word who endows all things with life. The Savior Himself testifies to this when He says: 'The flesh is of no avail; it is the spirit that gives life' (Jn. 6:63). Because it became the Word's own flesh it is therefore regarded as life-giving and actually is so." St. Cyril of Alexandria (431)

Incarnational Thoughts

HOMILY ~ About the Chief Prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah

**"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel."
(Isaiah 7:14)**

This glorious prophecy concerning the birth of the Lord by a virgin was spoken by Isaiah, the Prophet who saw God, at the moment of the greatest despair which befell Jerusalem. The multitudinous army of Syrians had surrounded the city, around the very walls of the city. King Ahaz, with neither an army nor weapons and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in mortal fear. "The heart of the king [Ahaz] and the heart of the people trembled, as the trees of the forest tremble in the wind" (Isaiah 7:2). In that final hour of the king's despair, Isaiah came before the king and by command of God said to him: "Fear not neither be fainthearted" (Isaiah 7:4). Then Isaiah prophesied that the enemies would not take Jerusalem. Seeing that King Ahaz did not believe him, Isaiah told the king to ask for a sign, a miracle, be it from heaven or from earth. However, the unbelieving king did not want to ask but remained obstinate in his doubt. The Prophet then said that God would give them a sign, even though they did not seek it.

This sign refers to distant times and concerns the universal salvation of the mankind. "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel" which is to say: "God is with us." Why did not the Prophet immediately give a sign so that the king would believe? Because, that prophecy about the salvation of Jerusalem, in the hour when the king thought that all had fallen, was sufficient enough to show both the power of God and the unbelief of the king.

Why did the Prophet, at that very moment and under such circumstances, foretell the prophecy of the birth of the Savior? Because mankind, at the time of the coming of the Savior, will be in the same kind of despair, pressured by and surrounded by the powers of the demons, as was Jerusalem at that moment. Did the Prophet explicitly say Virgin and not a Woman? Naturally, he mentioned a Virgin. For if the prophecy were spoken of a woman, what kind of miracle would it be; what kind of sign? Are not all men born of women? All the weight of emphasis is on the word "Virgin."

Thus, the All-seeing God knows how to tie in the near with the distant and that, by fulfilling one prophecy in the present, He confirms a second prophecy in the future. "Emmanuel - God is with us" - He saved Jerusalem then as an invisible God. "Emmanuel God is with us." He will save mankind in similar dangers later on as the Incarnate God, as God-Man, born of the All-Pure Virgin and the Holy Spirit.

O Lord, Who gave power to the Prophets to see the truth as it comes from afar, give us the power to embrace that truth which has already come. To Thee be glory and thanks always!
Amen.

The Holy Prophet Micah

The Prophet Micah was of the tribe of Judah and from the village of Morasth for which he is called the "Morasthite." He was a contemporary of the Prophets Isaiah, Amos, Hosea and the Jewish Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Micah rebuked the vices of his people and rebuked the false prophets who prophesied "of wine and of strong drink" (Micah 2:11). He foretold the destruction of Samaria. He also foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, which will come because their leaders accept bribes, the priests teach for lucre and its Prophets tell fortunes for money. "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field and Jerusalem shall become as heaps" (Micah 3:12).

But, of all his prophecies, the most important prophecy is that of the Messiah, especially the place of His birth. He mentioned Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).