



**The Nativity According to the Flesh of Our Lord,
and God, and Saviour Jesus Christ
Which the Holy Church Celebrates on December 25.**

The incomprehensible and inexplicable Nativity of Christ came to pass when Herod the Great was reigning in Judea; the latter was an Asconlite on his father's side and an Idumean on his mother's. He was in every way foreign to the royal line of David; rather he had received his authority from the Roman emperors, and had ruled tyrannically over the Jewish people for some thirty-three years. The tribe of Judah, which had reigned of old, was deprived of its rights and stripped of all rule and authority. Such was the condition of the Jews when the awaited Messiah was born, and thus truly fulfilled the prophecy which the Patriarch Jacob had spoken 1,807 years before: "A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a prince from his loins, until there come the things stored up for him; and he is the expectation of the nations" (Gen.49:10 LXX).

Thus, our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, a city of Judea, whither Joseph had come from Nazareth of Galilee, taking Mary his betrothed, who was great with child, that, according to the decree issued in those days by the Emperor Augustus, they might be registered in the census of those subject to Rome.

Therefore, when the time came for the Virgin to give birth, and since because of the great multitude there was no place in the inn, the Virgin's circumstance constrained them to enter a cave which was near Bethlehem. Having as shelter a stable of irrational beasts, she gave birth there, and swaddled the Infant and laid Him in the manger (Luke 2:1-7). From this the tradition has come down to us that when Christ was born He lay between two animals, an ox and an ass, that the words of the Prophets might be fulfilled: "Between two living creatures shalt Thou be known (Abbacum 3:2 LXX), and "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib" (Esaias 1:3 LXX).

But while the earth gave the new-born Saviour such a humble reception, Heaven on high celebrated majestically His world-saving coming. A wondrous star, shining with uncommon brightness and following a strange course, led the Magi from the East to Bethlehem, to worship the new-born King. Certain shepherds who were in the area of Bethlehem, who kept watch while tending their sheep, were suddenly surrounded by an extraordinary light, and they saw before them an Angel who proclaimed to them the good tidings of the Lord's joyous Nativity. And straightway, together with this Angel, they beheld and heard a whole host of the Heavenly Powers praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:8-14).

Rest from labour for three days. All foods allowed
from this day until the eve of Theophany.

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Dismissal Hymn. Fourth Tone

THU Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world: for thereby they that worshipped the stars were instructed 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.

Hypakoë. Plagal of Fourth Tone

IN calling the Magi by a star, Heaven brought the first-fruits of the nations unto Thee, a Babe lying in a manger; and they were astonished that there was neither scepter nor throne, but only the uttermost poverty. For what is meaner than a cave? And what is lower than swaddling-clothes? Yet in them the riches of Thy Divinity shone forth. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

*Kontakion. Third Tone
The Original Melody*

ON this day the Virgin beareth the Transcendent in essence; * to the Unapproachable, * the earth doth offer a small cave; * Angels join in choir with shepherds * in giving glory; * with a star the Magi travel upon their journey; * for our sakes is born a young Child, * He that existed * before the ages as God.



**FROM THE ICONOSTASIS
OF THE
HOLY NATIVITY CONVENT
BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS**

VESPERS

Second tone. By Germanus

COME, let us rejoice in the Lord as we declare this present mystery. The Middle wall of partition is broken asunder; the flaming sword is turned back, the Cherubim withdraw from the Tree of Life, and I partake of the Paradise of Delight, whence I was cast out before through disobedience. For the identical likeness of the Father, the Express Image of His eternity, taketh the form of a servant, and without undergoing change He cometh forth from a Mother that knew not wedlock. For that which he was, He hath remained, even true God; and that which He was not, He hath taken upon Himself, becoming man out of love for man. Unto Him let us cry: O God, Who art born of a Virgin, have mercy on me.

SYNAXARION

On the twenty-fifth of the month we celebrate the Nativity according to the Flesh of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Verses

The Child born is God, and the Mother, a Virgin;
What greater marvel hath appeared in Creation?

On the twenty-fifth Mary the Virgin gave birth to God.



**MOSAIC OVER THE ENTRANCE OF
THE HOLY NATIVITY CONVENT.**