



# The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church  
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

**Sunday 21st December 2025**

**Sunday before the Nativity of Christ**



## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are a few days away from the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "It's the most wonderful time of the year," as it is said in the secular and very nice song, but it is so clearly and directly explained that I couldn't resist quoting this song. I wish you all a wonderful Feast, and may God bless you and keep you! It is so amazing to witness how the world changes at this time of the year. Believers and non-believers, Christians and even non-Christians, everybody witnesses this time of the Incarnation of the Lord. We will have plenty of services in the church. All are welcome to participate. The best reflection of the Nativity is in our services. Father Pancratios said that he will come for most of the services. If you plan to do your Confession, you will have plenty of opportunities. I would take this moment to say a few things about Confession and the practices around it. When you plan to do your Confession, you should arrive at the church earlier. Please note that during the Divine Liturgy is not the right time to ask about Confession. The Divine Liturgy is the Service that we participate in physically and spiritually. Also, you should know that in Orthodoxy there is hierarchy in the priesthood. This hierarchy is sacred, and we should follow it at any time without exclusions. So when Fr. Pancratios is present in the church, he is the senior priest, and he will be the one who conducts the Divine Liturgy. It is not possible for him to do the Service and at the same time deal with the confessions of the people. So please, respect this, and let us all together work for establishing good practices in our church according to the Sacred Tradition of the Orthodox Faith. The Orthodox Faith is not emotionalism that pleases every wish of the people, but is the fulfillment of the Holy Tradition of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. So please arrange your Confession beforehand with Fr. Pancratios. Just for example... when you book your flight

the ticket say that you need to be at least two hours earlier, and I'm sure none of you go latter to the airport.... So let us all show the same respect and faithfulness to our Tradition, Liturgical life and to God.

Fr. John



## Announcements

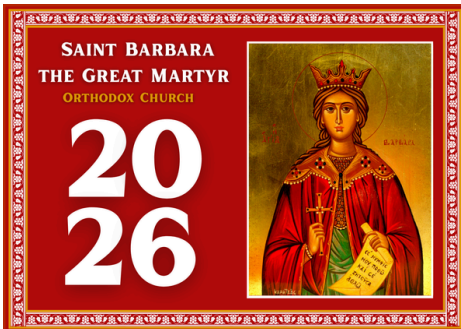
- Please note that on 20 December, the Forefeast of the Nativity starts, and we do not serve prayers for the departed until Theophany, but we still commemorate them in our private prayers.
- After Theophany, we are starting our choir practice gatherings every Saturday from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm. The first gathering will be on 10 January.
- We agreed at the church council meeting that the dirty carpet on the floor will be replaced with something more practical and easier to clean and keep tidy. We are looking for something like what is used in kitchens. If you know someone who can do the job and you can recommend them, please let me know and we can arrange a meeting to discuss the job. Also, if you would like to donate to this project, see me, Lidya, or Theodoros. We will change the carpet in the Altar as well, probably with a cleaner and better carpet.
- For the Feast of Theophany, we are going to bless the waters of the River Dee. At about 12 am, we are going down to the river at Eccleston. Make sure you have proper shoes; it may be a little bit muddy. Straight after the blessing, we will start blessing homes with the holy water. If you wish your home to be blessed, see me or Fr. Pancratios. It is good for all this to be done in the first days after Theophany.

## Upcoming Services

21 Dec Sunday	10:00 11:00 14:00	Matins Divine Liturgy Parish Feast	Sunday before Nativity  Northop Hall
24 Dec Wednesday	18:00	Vespers with Liturgy of St Basil	Eve of Nativity
25 Dec Thursday	10:00 11:00	Matins Divine Liturgy of St Basil	The Nativity according to the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ
28 Dec Sunday	10:00 11:00	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday after Nativity of Christ
01 Jan Thursday	10:00 11:00	Matins Divine Liturgy of St Basil	Circumcision of Our Lord St Basil the Great
03 Jan Saturday	17:30	Great Vespers	
04 Jan Sunday	10:00 11:00	Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of the Waters	Sunday before Epiphany
05 Jan Monday	18:00	Vesperal Liturgy	Feast of Theophany
06 Jan Tuesday	09:00 10:00 12:00	Matins Divine Liturgy Blessing of the River Dee	Theophany of Christ  River Dee, Eccleston



## The Best Orthodox Calendar on the Market in the UK



Our Calendar for 2026 is still on sale. Please contact Fr. John to purchase one. Our Calendar this year is the best on the market in the UK. Don't waste your time searching for one... just trust me and buy this beautiful calendar, which is full of valuable information. For £10 you will get an A4 wall calendar containing beautifully printed pictures, icons, explanations, hymnography for the main feast of the month, the feasts and saints of each day, daily readings, fasting requirements, and a bit of history from the community. It is the best present for your close one. Simply the best!

## A story from our Community

To make it as a tradition, you will see a random icon at the end of this text.... to find out who is in the icon, and what is to do with Nativity...please read to the end. Do not skip there is interesting things in the middle.

It is few days before Christmas, the Nativity of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. All the people do they traditional every year Christmas rush. It is glorious and lights everywhere. It is the same in our church as well. We are all waiting for the moment in which we will start greeting each other with the words "Christ is born! Glorify Him! It is all lights, bold and special...even between the people who are not described as Christians or believers.

In Orthodoxy we have something that make us different from many other denominations. And this is the Hymnography of our church. This little hymns telling so much and they are full with emotion, theology, storytelling, and all this in a few simple lines. especially now around Nativity. There are many Chrismass songs that we listen again and again every year. Some of them are really good songs (Mariah Carry "s "all I want for Christmas is you" is simply boring) but our church hymns are the best. The Orthodox church have tressure from hymns. Now in the time of the Forefeast we already started to have the taste of Nativity.. In the Matins you can hear the chant of the Katavasia for Christmas "Christ is born! Glorify Him! \* Christ is come from heaven! Go and meet Him! \* Christ is on earth! Arise to Him! \* Sing to the Lord, all you inhabitants of earth, and all you peoples, praise Him, \* and with merriment extol Him who is glorified!"

This is just a small bit and is beautiful to remind us that Christ Incarnation is the truly a gift and a complete showing of the Gods love to the Creation. God is Incarnate! Glorify Him all the Earth....

And this Katavasia will be repeated and will lead us to the most famous and very beautiful Troparion of the Nativity

"Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the Light of knowledge; for by it, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore You, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know You, the Dayspring from on High. O Lord, glory to You! ". This short hymn have so deep meaning and very clearly explain the incarnation of god and the reason for this Incarnation. It is so good that someone told me that would put it on the wall, as every day reminder for this holy time.

The modern life make every effort to disconnect us from this truly amazing words of the meaning of Christ Nativity. God showed himself to the whole world, even those who worshiped the idols the stars in the sky, by a star he showed them, who is the one they have to worship. He sowed himself in any way that we can acknowledge Him. By His Nativity he became man and appeared in all things, so we can know Him and adore Him as Sun of Righteousness, The Begging from on High, The Dawn from on High. If we could hear this words in our cars radio and meditate on them few months a year it will be different experience. Instead we hear arain and again..."I just want you for my own, More than you could ever know Make my wish come true All I want for Christmas is you You, baby " I would not make dissection on this world...I will leave it for everyone. I will just say that we all pay the price for this words. Mentally, Spiritually by forgetting what really Nativity is. Who Christ is! We pay even every year the bill for this text. £2 milion in the pocket of Ms Carey every Christmas for the pleasure to hear this sweet delusion every hour in every place in this dominion. Ho-Ho-Ho



We don't know who wrote the beautiful troparion hymn for the Nativity to pay him royalties. For that reason we pay royalties to God for giving this knowledge to all of us and we all say "...O Lord Grory to You!

Now about this little icon. This is St. Romanos the Melodist. He didn't made it to radios and Tv shows. No one pay him royalties, but he wrote over a 1000 hymns and some of them made it to our Liturgical books and one of them is the one of the best known between the orthodox people, kontakion for the Nativity "On this day the Virgin gives \* birth to the Super-essential. \* To the Unapproachable, \* earth is providing the grotto. \* Angels sing and with the shepherds offer up glory. \* Following a star the Magi are still proceeding. \* He was born for our salvation, a newborn Child, the pre-eternal God." Come to church in this holy days and let us all chant or meditate on this amazing hims given us through the Saints like St. Romanos. Christ is born! Let us Glorify Him!

The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.  
To access the full bulleting, please visit: [www.thyateira.org.uk](http://www.thyateira.org.uk).

## ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ.

*Ἐβρ. ια´, 9-10, 32-40*

Ἀδελφοί, πίστει παρῶκησεν Ἀβραάμ εἰς τὴν γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ὡς ἄλλοτριαν, ἐν σκηναῖς κατοικήσας μετὰ Ἰσαάκ καὶ Ἰακώβ τῶν συγκληρονόμων τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῆς αὐτῆς· ἐξεδέχετο γάρ τὴν τοῦς θεμελίου ἔχουσαν πόλιν, ἥς τεχνίτης καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ Θεός. Καὶ τί ἔτι λέγω; Ἐπιλείψει γάρ με διηγούμενον ὁ χρόνος περὶ Γεδεών, Βαράκ τε καὶ Σαμψῶν καὶ Ἰεφθάε, Δαυὶδ τε καὶ Σαμουὴλ καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, οἱ διὰ πίστεως κατηγωνίσαντο βασιλείας, εἰργάσαντο δικαιοσύνην, ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν, ἔφραξαν στόματα λεόντων, ἔσβησαν δύναμιν πυρός, ἔφυγον στόματα μαχαίρας, ἐνεδυναμώθησαν ἀπὸ ἀσθενείας, ἐγένηθησαν ἰσχυροὶ ἐν πολέμῳ, παρεμβολὰς ἐκλιναν ἄλλοτρίων· ἔλαβον γυναῖκες ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τοῦς νεκροῦς αὐτῶν· ἄλλοι δὲ ἐτυμpanίσθησαν, οὐ προσδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τύχωσιν· ἕτεροι δὲ ἐμπαγμῶν καὶ μαστίγων πείραν ἔλαβον, ἔτι δὲ δεσμῶν καὶ φυλακῆς· ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπίρισθησαν, ἐπειράσθησαν, ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρας ἀπέθανον, περιήλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, ὕστερομνοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι, ὧν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος, ἐν ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσι καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὁπαῖς τῆς γῆς. Καὶ οὗτοι πάντες μαρτυρηθέντες διὰ τῆς πίστεως οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, τοῦ Θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν κρείττον τι προβλεψαμένου, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσι.

## EPISTLE READING

*Heb. 11: 9-10; 32-40*

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

## ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

*Ματθ. α´, 1-25*

Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Ἀβραάμ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰσαάκ, Ἰσαάκ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰακώβ, Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰούδαν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ, Ἰούδας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Φαρέν καὶ τὸν Ζαρά ἐκ τῆς Θάμαρ, Φαρέν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἑσρώμ, Ἑσρώμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἄραμ, Ἄραμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἄμιναδάβ, Ἄμιναδάβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ναασῶν, Ναασῶν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Σαλμών, Σαλμών δὲ ἐγέννησε

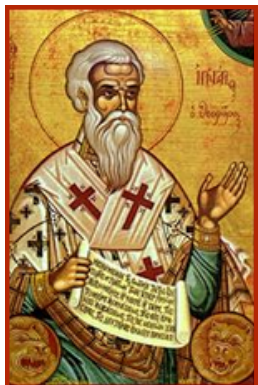
## GOSPEL READING

*Matt. 1: 1-25*

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and

τὸν Βοὸζ ἐκ τῆς Ῥαχάβ, Βοὸζ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ὠβὴδ ἐκ τῆς Ῥουθ, Ὠβὴδ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰεσσαί, Ἰεσσαί δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Δαυῖδ τὸν Βασιλεῖα. Δαυῖδ δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐγέννησε τὸν Σολομῶνα ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Ὀυρίου, Σολομῶν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ῥοβοᾶμ, Ῥοβοᾶμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀβιά, Ἀβιά δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀσά, Ἀσά δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωσαφάτ, Ἰωσαφάτ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωράμ, Ἰωράμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ὀζιαν, Ὀζίας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωθάμ, Ἰωθάμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀχαζ, Ἀχαζ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐζεκιαν, Ἐζεκίας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Μανασσῆ, Μανασσῆ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀμὼν, Ἀμὼν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωσιαν, Ἰωσίας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰεχονίαν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος. Μετὰ δὲ τὴν μετοικεσίαν Βαβυλῶνος Ἰεχονίας ἐγέννησε τὸν Σαλαθιήλ, Σαλαθιήλ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ζοροβάβελ, Ζοροβάβελ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀβιούδ, Ἀβιούδ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐλιακίμ, Ἐλιακίμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀζώρ, Ἀζώρ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Σαδώκ, Σαδώκ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀχείμ, Ἀχείμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐλιούδ, Ἐλιούδ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐλεάζαρ, Ἐλεάζαρ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ματθάν, Ματθάν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰακώβ, Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀνδρὰ Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός. Πᾶσαι οὖν αἱ γενεαὶ ἀπὸ Ἀβραὰμ ἕως Δαυῖδ γενεαὶ δεκατέσσαρες, καὶ ἀπὸ Δαυῖδ ἕως τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος γενεαὶ δεκατέσσαρες, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος ἕως τοῦ Χριστοῦ γενεαὶ δεκατέσσαρες. Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ γεννήσις οὕτως ἦν. μνηστευθεῖσιν γὰρ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ Μαρίας τῷ Ἰωσήφ, πρὶν ἢ συναθεῖν αὐτοὺς εὐρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου. Ἰωσήφ δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς, δίκαιος ὢν καὶ μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν παραδειγματῆσαι, ἐβουλήθη λάθρα ἀπολῦσαι αὐτήν. ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμηθέντος ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος Κυρίου κατ' ὄναρ ἐφάνη αὐτῷ λέγων· Ἰωσήφ υἱὸς Δαυῖδ, μὴ φοβηθῆς παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκά σου· τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ Πνεύματος ἁγίου. τέξεται δὲ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν· αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν. Τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ, ὃ ἐστὶ μεθερμηνεούμενον μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός. Διεγερθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰωσήφ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου ἐποίησεν ὡς προσέταξεν αὐτῷ ὁ ἄγγελος Κυρίου καὶ παρέλαβε τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγέννησεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον, καὶ ἐκάλεσε τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν.

Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.



## Saint Ignatius

Saint Ignatius was a disciple of Saint John the Theologian, and a successor of the Apostles, and he became the second Bishop of Antioch, after Evodus. He wrote many epistles to the faithful, strengthening them in their confession, and preserving for us the teachings of the holy Apostles. Brought to Rome under Trajan, he was surrendered to lions to be eaten, and so finished the course of martyrdom about the year 107. The remnants of his bones were carefully gathered by the faithful and brought to Antioch. He is called God-bearer, as one who bare God within himself and was aflame in heart with love for Him. Therefore, in his Epistle to the Romans (ch. 4), imploring their love not to attempt to deliver him from his longed-for martyrdom, he said, "I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found to be the pure bread of God."

### SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

On the Sunday before the Nativity according to the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Church presents us with the opening chapter of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew: 'The Book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham'.

The long list of names that follows, so often overlooked by readers, is much more than St Matthew's attempt to prove our Lord's Messianic pedigree. Rather, it presents us with men and women of faith, and specifically men and women who lived in expectation of the coming of God's salvation.

Our Lord tells us that, 'Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them' (Luke 10:24). David, the Prophet-King, expresses this intense longing for the coming of Christ in his Psalms, saying, 'My soul fainteth for Thy salvation; on Thy words have I set my hope. Mine eyes are grown dim with waiting for Thine oracle; they say: When wilt Thou comfort me?' (Psalm 118:81-82).

This list of names, then, invites us to consider what it means for us to live in a world where the Lord's salvation is no longer a future hope, but an act already accomplished. Our God is not a distant abstraction, but Emmanuel, 'God with us'. The separation between God and man is ended, the power of evil is vanquished, the Gates of Paradise are reopened, while those of death and Hades lie broken. Today, as at every Divine Liturgy, the Almighty Creator of the Universe lovingly grants us participation of His very Body and Blood under the humble forms of bread and wine, distributed to the faithful by the frail hands of his unworthy servants.

We, as Christians, as members of the Church of the New Testament, are granted an intimacy with God that not only far exceeds what the men and women of today's Gospel reading longed for, but to which even the Angels of heaven "stoop down with longing" to see and hear (Cf. 5th Prayer of the Service of Holy Unction).

Today's Gospel reading thus confronts us with a question: do we live as if we are indeed the beloved children of God, the friends of Christ, members of His Body, and living temples of the Holy Spirit? Or have we allowed familiarity to breed contempt, and live as if we are still subject to bondage, fearing death and doubting God's promises? If the latter is true, as it perhaps is for many of us, how do we attain to the former?

The genealogy does not leave us without an answer. Behind every name listed is a story, and each of these stories teach us how to make the truth of God's promise perceptible to us. From Abraham, for example, we learn trust. We see the need for renunciation as the first step of every spiritual journey – 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee' (Gen. 12:1) – and how we should be ready to give up and sacrifice even our deepest attachments and that which we hold most dear (Gen. 22) so that love for God can reign in our hearts (cf. Vil. 3:15). From his grandson Jacob, who wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, we learn the need for perseverance in prayer, to not abandon our struggle until we have received the consolation of grace; saying to the Lord, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me' (32:26). From Rahab, we learn the value of kindness. Though a sinful woman and a harlot, her act of compassion towards those in danger earned her not only the forgiveness of sins, but the honour of being an ancestor of Christ. From David we learn the power of repentance. Though guilty of the double sin of murder and adultery, his repentance was such that God called him 'a man after His own heart' (1 Kingdoms 13:14). While the fruit of his sin had been death (2 Kingdoms 2:18), the fruit of his repentance was glory (12:24). Others, like Zerubbabel, give us the hope of return, the renewal of our spiritual faculties and rebuilding of our relationship with God (Ezra 3).

Every name has a story, guiding us to that 'name which is above every name' (Phil. 2:9). Let us contemplate and draw inspiration from each one, so that we can truly celebrate the Nativity of the Lord as the fulfilment of their hope and the source of ours.

Oeconomos Kristian Akselberg

*You probably noticed that we have basket to rise money for the ministries we support in Sierra Leone and Uganda. This is very poor communities who live in extreme poverty. Alexios who run the Sierra Leone mission once said the Troy that illustrate the poverty in which the people live. During the divine Liturgy some of the children tried to take Communion more than once, by going in the que again, because this is the only think they will eat in this day.*



### Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)

COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.

To learn more visit: [www.coty.org.uk](http://www.coty.org.uk).

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## Synaxarion

### The Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ



This icon presents the Nativity of Christ, with the infant lying in a humble manger at the center, swaddled in burial clothes that foreshadow His death and resurrection. He rests in a cave, a tradition tracing back to the early centuries, which also prefigures the tomb in which He would be laid. Beside Him, the Virgin Mary intercedes silently, not looking at her Son but toward her betrothed, Joseph, whose mind is troubled by the old man, often interpreted as the devil, filling him with doubt and fear. Behind the Christ child, the ox and the ass stand quietly, symbols of the union of Jews and Gentiles in Him, the obedient and the wild, the clean and the unclean, now brought together.

At the very top, a mandorla radiates from heaven, signaling the glory of God and the descent of Christ from heaven to earth. Angels hover above, proclaiming the Good News to the shepherds in the fields on the right, while the three kings or Magi travel from afar on the left, following the guiding star and bringing precious gifts. At the bottom right, midwives tend to the newborn, emphasizing that the Son of God is also truly human, experiencing birth and care as any child does.

A young shepherd plays a simple reed flute, offering the joyful sound of human praise at the Savior's birth. His music mirrors the song of the angels above, yet the flute carries a deeper symbolism

as well. In sacred imagery, it is the instrument used to lament the ancient gods of Greece. The shepherd's melody can therefore be heard as a quiet dirge for the old pagan world, whose age has ended with the coming of Christ.

The composition brings together contrasts of every kind: heaven and earth, rich and poor, wise and simple, learned and unlearned, locals and foreigners, the obedient and the rebellious, the confident and the doubtful. In the center of this gathering is Jesus, uniting all in Himself.

Christ stands at the center of creation, we are drawn to the profound mystery of the Incarnation, seeing God enter the world in humility and fragility. In Christ, all divisions are bridged, and every human heart is called to recognize His presence. The Nativity invites us to witness the uniting of heaven and earth, the holy and the humble, and to behold the divine love that transforms all creation.

### Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. Remember that all our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including of the building and all the bills.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance of the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sing it. Thank you for your support !



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