

The Sunday after the Nativity

Matthew 2:13-23

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. (KJV)

Peace of God! Christ is Born! God's Holy Church is fully celebrating the Feast of the Nativity throughout the world. In unity with believers from previous centuries, the focus is clearly on the birth of the Christ Child.

Joy fills the hearts, minds and souls of believers. Peace and love triumph with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hate and sin are rejected, conquered by the presence of truth and love.

Today God's Holy Church also celebrates the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen. St. Stephen is a primary example of faith, love and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ,

Protomartyr Stephen witnessed for Christ in a way that has inspired believers in each of the following centuries. His strong and undeniable faith rested in love of Christ and in forgiveness as demonstrated by Christ.

The Feast of the Nativity is a time to look to the lasting values of life exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers celebrating the feast with complete faith and love become new in Christ.

The Christ Child is a lasting source of joy. All children are gifts of joy. Today's Gospel speaks of the threat to the Christ Child by Herod and Archelaus. Herod slew children under two years of age.

Too many children continue presently to suffer in the world. Children's lives are lost tragically prior to birth through abortion. Not all children born into this world are treated with great love and care.

Believers have a lasting responsibility to protect children and advocate for their need for love and proper care at all stages of life beginning at conception. The Christ Child exemplifies enduring love lasting forever.

Thank God for the Church focusing on the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and continuing to celebrate through the centuries. The celebration enables believers to unite with Christ and enriches believers in their hearts, minds and souls.

Celebrating the Feast of the Nativity brings believers together in the Church and in their homes and communities. The opportunity to partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ exists in the festal Divine Liturgies.

Expressions of great faith are manifested in the Church at the time of the Feast of the Nativity. The demands of daily life are set aside to focus on the significance of Christ's birth.

The Mother of God is central to the celebration. Joseph's actions to protect the Christ Child from harm are of lasting memory in the Church. Today's Gospel is a lesson for parents to be alert to protect and love their children at all times.

The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ changed the world forever. Christ grew through the years from the time of birth and manifested Himself in ways that remain fulfilling in the present and forever.

Eternal life is possible in the timeless Christ, the Child born into time. The Feast of the Nativity summons within believers the awe of the mystery of Jesus Christ's Virgin Birth and God's limitless ways to act.

The Feast of the Nativity is a new beginning in the world. Believers learn from the Feast and have the opportunity to share Christ's love in daily life in the home and community.

The Church encourages believers to prepare well for the Feast and to actively celebrate Christ's birth. The Church's history is rich with demonstrations of faith. The Feast has taken extended form through the centuries.

Now is the time to thank God for the blessings arising from the Feast of the Nativity. Now is the time to be active in God's Holy Church in celebrating Christ's birth.

Each person benefits from the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The remaining days of life are well invested in discovering more about the birth of Christ and the lasting meaning for each life. Peace of God! Christ is Born!

Twenty Ninth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy God bearing Fathers. Holy Apostle, Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen. December 27, 2021/January 9, 2022.
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic