

The Sunday before the Nativity
The Sunday of the Holy God-bearing Fathers
Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS

.(KJV)

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The present Gospel is proclaimed in God's Holy Church every year on the Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity. Jesus Christ's birth as God taking on human flesh in simple surroundings to a young virgin woman captivates the human mind.

The Gospel speaks plainly about the action of the Holy Spirit in Christ's birth. Jesus' birth being identified as "God with us" challenges the human mind. This singular extraordinary birth merits extensive thought.

The believer must turn to the Lord for guidance and understanding of Christ's birth and meaning. The present Gospel mentions known figures through the centuries recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

The prophecy of Christ's virgin birth is an integral part of the present Gospel. The message to the world today is deeply rooted in preceding centuries. The Church celebrates Christ's birth in the present while clearly knowing the path through history.

The Gospel states Jesus will save His people from their sins. This message of hope for every generation of sinners opens the roadway to a life of joy. Sin need not weigh down the believer. Sin need not paralyze the believer.

Life needs not to be overcome with darkness, gloom and despair. Every person thinks, says or does something contrary to God's teachings. The Lord Jesus Christ, born of a virgin as proclaimed by the Prophet offers Light to overcome darkness.

Every generation, every year, believers need to experience the joy of Jesus Christ's birth. The message of the forgiveness of sins never gets old. The message of the forgiveness of sins never decreases in value.

Jesus' forgiveness of sins is clearly associated with believers' forgiveness of others. (Lk.17:3-4) Forgiveness heals the heart, mind and soul of the forgiven. When believers forgive others, the believer acts as a healer just as Jesus Christ is the Healer.

The world benefits when healing abounds. The world is better when Jesus forgives sinners. The world is better when sinners repent and forgive each other. Households are strengthened when forgiveness is frequent in the family.

Parishes are stronger when parishioners forgive each other readily. Communities improve when forgiveness abounds among the residents. Nations get along better when leaders do not hold grudges against other world leaders.

Peace is associated with Jesus Christ's birth. As the celebration of Jesus' birth approaches, each heart, mind and soul does well to think carefully about practicing forgiveness with others. Each believer does well to try to be at peace with others.

Proverbs 16:7 states "When a man's **ways please the LORD**, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." (KJV) Every home, community and nation benefits when peace prevails. May Jesus Christ's birth result in greater peace among us.

The Sunday before the Nativity. The Sunday of the Holy God-bearing Fathers. Holy Martyr Sebastian. St. Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem and Others with him.
December 18/31, 2023, Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic