

DIVINE LITURGIES FOR THIS WEEK

Sunday After Christmas, December 26, 2021

9:00 AM - Lit. + Vera and Marie Glowa

11:30 AM - Lit. For God's Blessings on Our Parishioners

Monday, December 27, 2021**Feast of St. Stephen**

7:30 AM - Lit. + Anton J. Massopust r/by Olga Markiw

Wednesday, December 29, 2021

7:30 AM - Lit. + Kenneth Chordas r/by Geri Zavorsky Larsen

Thursday, December 30, 2021

7:30 AM - Lit. + Helena Kawanka r/by Czeslawa Putera

Friday, December 31, 2021

7:30 AM - Health of Olga Yurechko - r/by Alla Korostil

Saturday, January 1, 2022**Circumcision of Our Lord, Basil the Great Archbishop**

9:00 AM - Lit. For Living and Departed

Members of the Parish

5:00 PM - Lit. + Irene Dochych r/by Senior Citizens Club

Sunday Before Theophany, January 2, 2022*Epistle - 2 Tim 4:5-8; Gospel - Mk 1:1-8*

9:00 AM - Lit. God's Blessings for Anna & Vasyl Kitchoula

r/by Maria Derevenska

11:30 AM - Lit. For God's Blessings on Our Parishioners

Ukrainian Christmas Eve Dinner Buffet

Holy Name Society is sponsoring a traditional Christmas Eve dinner, Proshpora, on Thursday, January 6, 2022 at 7:00 PM in the School Hall. The meatless dinner will include pyrohy, stuffed cabbage, seafood, red cabbage salad, borscht, mushroom gravy and more. Please sign-up on the sheet in the church vestibule. Any questions please contact Charlie Boyko at 732-586-0405.

2022 Weekly Offering Envelopes

Pick up your envelopes in the church hall. Every married couple or single person 18 years or over is to be registered and receive envelopes. The neglect of regular church attendance and regular use of church envelopes can lead to difficulties at the time of baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc. If you did not receive Church envelopes, and would like to, please call the Church office at 732-826-0767 during regular office hours.

Those parishioners who did not pick up 2021 envelopes because of COVID were given those envelopes to use for 2022. It is ok to use your old envelopes since the envelope number is the same.

Donations to the Church

In spite of the pandemic, the maintenance of our church continues and bills must be paid. Thanks to all who continue to serve our church with their time, talent, and treasure.

\$1,000.00 - Kernitsky Family Fund

\$1,000.00- Paula Hunchar

\$500.00 - Coffee Hour

\$500.00 - Myron & Maria Rajsz

\$200.00 - Anna & Vasyl Kitchoula

\$200.00 - Sale of Christmas Ornaments

\$125.00 - The Salsini Family

Gift for Children.

Children: St. Nicholas has a Christmas gift for you! Look for your Christmas tree ornament by the church manger.

Thank You

- I wish to express my gratitude to the members of our parish, Colette and John Baginsky, Melanie Fedynshyn, Mary Retalis, Alla Korostil, and Lisa Romanetz, who made strutslia, Ukrainian Christmas bread for our parishioners. It wouldn't be Christmas without having this bread for Holy Supper (Sviata Vechir).
- Special thanks to Iryna Kuzyszyn who came to clean the church for Christmas.
- Thank you to Maria, Mary, Ana and Sr. Maria for changing altar linens for Christmas

PASTOR EXTENDS GRATITUDE FOR CHRISTMAS REMEMBERANCE

— Fr. Ivan extends heart-felt thanks to all who remembered him by way of prayers, greeting cards, gifts, monetary gifts, food items and cooperation to ready the Church for this Christmas Season. God bless all of you for your remembrances, kindnesses & thoughtfulness!!!

**ХРИСТОС НАРОДИВСЯ! СЛАВІМО ЙОГО!****Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

Dear Parish Family, this past year of 2021 has been quite a year. We pray that we may not have to experience its likes ever again. The reality of unexpected events in the New Year remains hidden from our eyes. As a parish that continues to be anchored in Christ, based upon the Rock of the Holy Apostle Peter, we can get through whatever lies ahead. We firmly believe, our Sovereign King, the Lord Jesus will be with us as He has promised.

May we always adhere to His Commandments. Through prayer and the frequent worthy reception of the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) our witness will strengthen our charity towards one another demonstrating that we are truly His disciples.

On behalf of Deacon Paul, myself and our parish staff, I sincerely hope that the remembrance of Christ's birth brings you much joy, peace and hope.

I extend a special welcome if you are joining us for the first time, if you are visiting from any other places or faith traditions, or if you do not worship with us on a regular basis. If you wish to register with our parish, please see me - Fr. Ivan, or email us at: assumptionchurch@verizon.net

Despite this time of national anxiety and division, have a great Christmas with all your family and friends!

God Bless You! Fr. Ivan**School's 2021 Christmas Concert.**

Our parish school students worked diligently with their music teacher, Miss Lawrence, to create this beautiful program. Their happiness, their love, and their excitement was showcased and the true meaning of the Christmas season was portrayed. The last time we were together was December 2019 and although that doesn't seem like that long, we all know it has been a difficult couple of years. We stand proud of the work that the teachers and staff have done and continue to do daily. They are passionate about their profession and during this pandemic have shown that Catholic Schools have been able to get the job done. We have kept our children on grade level, continue to offer them a safe space and opportunities to express their thoughts, and have shown them to trust in God's plan. The show was dedicated to all the parents, guardians and extended family members who support our students and our mission at Assumption Catholic School - to know, to love, to serve God.

The Gift of Christmas*How many of you send out Christmas cards?*

There was a woman who had waited until the last minute to send Christmas cards. She knew she had 49 folks on her list. So she rushed into a store and bought a package of 50 cards without really looking at them. Still in a big hurry, she addressed the 49 and signed them without reading the message inside.

On Christmas Day when things had quieted down somewhat, she happened to come across the leftover card and finally read the message she had sent to 49 of her friends. Much to her dismay, it read like this: "This card is just to say a little gift is on the way."

Suddenly she realized that 49 of her friends were expecting a gift from her they were never going to get.

Beloved, unlike that unfortunate woman ... God HAS sent us a gift in Jesus, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him not perish, but have eternal life". John 3:16.

Keep Greeting One Another

Just as we prepared for Christmas with a 40-day preparation and fasting period, so now we celebrate the bright days of Christmas, New Year's, and Theophany for 40 days. Please continue to sing our beautiful Christmas carols, and to greet one another with our traditional "Christos Razhdayetsia! Slavite Yeho! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!" According to tradition, we continue to sing Christmas carols up until the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord on February 2nd.



CHRISTMAS PASTORAL OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY OF THE USA TO OUR CLERGY, RELIGIOUS, SEMINARIANS AND BELOVED FAITHFUL.

"Rejoice, O heavens, and be glad, O earth, and shout for joy, ye mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and hath had mercy on them that are oppressed" (Isaiah 49:13).

This prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled at Christmas – on the day the Messiah, our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, was born. More than 2,000 years have passed since God came to be among us, and although the chronological distance increases with each passing year, the significance, triumph, and experience of this most joyous moment in the history of salvation remains the same as it was on Christmas Eve.

It is today that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

In the incarnation of the Son of God, people received the image of the invisible God the Father and His Word, who was always God before the creation of the world and became man (John 1: 1-2) to make us good, pure, and beloved children of Heavenly Father once again. The coming of Christ into the world is such a great testimony and proof of God's love for us because no creature has received such an honor and care for its salvation as did the human race. God extended his mercy not because of our merits, but out of God's great mercy.

Jesus did not come to give us a new or improved law of morality, because it had already been given to us through Moses and our conscience serves as a guardian to monitor how well we fulfill it. Jesus did not come to work miracles, heal the sick, or raise the dead, because the Old Testament prophets did. Jesus became man not to bring us any temporary prosperity and satisfaction of all our earthly desires and needs, because he himself did not have it - he was born in a poor nativity scene, lacked many of our daily comforts, experienced cold, hunger, abuse, and humiliation. The reason for the coming of the Son of God is the complete renewal of the human race through the grace of God. He wanted to uncover the original beauty and value of man, which we had at the creation of the world, and, unfortunately, lost through sin. As He Himself said, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick"* (Luke 5:31).

He is the wonderful Doctor of the human nature Who heals and helps us to leave behind our attachment to sin and dependency on everything that is material, and make us think about Gospel message, values and principles that truly matter. He came to establish here the Kingdom of Heaven, where peace, not strife, reigns;

love is present, not hatred; truth prevails, not lies; mercy and compassion are common, not selfishness and indifference. The practical implementation of these values and virtues radically changes the state and quality of human existence for better – spiritually enriched. God's presence, His peace and grace are really felt. A person becomes the Human Being that the Lord has called and wants him or her to be.

God is with us and He is among us!

Among the many difficult circumstances of today - the coronavirus epidemic, political and economic crises, instability, declining material quality of life, tension and the constant threat of large-scale war in our beloved Ukraine by Russia, force us to rethink the guiding principles and values of our lives.

At this point we begin to understand infinite wisdom of God's law and love for us. His love is already manifested in Jesus' invitation, *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28).

So, let's come to Christ - let's go with our hearts, thoughts, and prayers to the poor stable of Bethlehem. Let us imagine the Baby Jesus lying in the hay, laughing, and holding out his arms, ready to hug us, calm us down, comfort us, encourage us and give us joy. And we will find true happiness there.

As St. Augustine said, *"our hearts are restless until they rest in You, Lord"*. We will experience the fullness of feelings and the high point of human experience while in the presence of the Lord God Himself. The beauty of Christ's Nativity stems from the simplicity of Christmas Eve, - deprived of all human splendor, but rich in special awareness and conviction that God is truly with us. In these bright and joyful days of Christmas, we wish you all to feel the peace and tranquility of the night of Bethlehem and the joy of the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of the world, praised by many angelic choirs, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"* (Luke 2: 14).

Being filled with this joy and grace in our hearts, let us share it with our neighbors, especially with the sick, those who are neglected, in need of attention and support. Let us be kind and generous, wishing everyone to have enough of earthly good things and God's grace. Let us sing carols loudly and everywhere, thus, announcing the coming of Christ the Savior to us!

May the newborn Baby Jesus bless you, your families, and communities this Christmas and every day! Christ was born! Praise Him!

+Borys Gudziak Archbishop of Philadelphia
Metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States

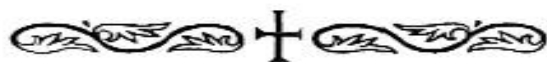
+Paul Chomnycky, OSBM Eparch of Stamford

+Benedict Aleksiychuk Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago

+ Bohdan J. Danylo Eparch of St. Josaphat in Parma

+Andriy Rabiychuk Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia (author)

December 2021



Archaeologists discover what was served at the Last Supper.

Jesus and the apostles were not sitting at a table, nor did they use wooden tableware.

A recent investigation into Palestinian cuisine in Jesus' time claims that, in addition to unleavened bread and wine, the Last Supper also included beans stew, lamb meat, olives, bitter herbs, fish sauce and *tamaras* – that is, dates.

Generoso Urciuoli, an archaeologist of the Petri Center, in Italy, and Marta Berogno, archaeologist and Egyptologist at the Egyptian Museum in Turin, are responsible for this research, which will be published next month in a book entitled *Gerusalemme: L'Ultima Cena (Jerusalem, the Last Supper)*.

The material collected by the researchers was sufficient for archaeologists to find information about eating habits in Jerusalem at the beginning of the 1st century. For instance, they confirmed that the Last Supper was not served on a rectangular table (as shown in most religious art), but rather Jesus and his apostles sat on cushions on the floor, following the Roman custom. "At that time, in Palestine, the food was placed on low tables and the guests ate sitting on cushions on the floor and resting carpets," Urciuoli said.

And of course, instead of lining up on one side of a table, Jesus and the apostles were most likely seated following the precise rules of etiquette at the time, in which the most important guests sat to the right or left of the main guest. "The Gospel of John indicates Judas was very close to Jesus, probably sitting to his left. In fact, we are told that Judas dipped his bread in Jesus' plate, following the practice of sharing food from a common dish," says Urciuoli.

In order to discover the *menu* served at the Last Supper, they used biblical passages including the Feast of Tabernacles, the wedding of Cana (where Jesus turned water into wine), and Herod's banquet (when John the Baptist's head was requested). "The passage of the Wedding of Cana allowed us to understand Jewish dietary laws (that is, the *kashrut*), which establishes what foods can and cannot be eaten and how they should be prepared. On the other hand, the feast of Herod allowed us to analyze Roman culinary influences in Jerusalem," said the archaeologist.

The studies reveal that beyond unleavened bread and wine, the Last Supper probably included *tzir*, a variant of *garum*, a typical Roman fish sauce; lamb meat; *cholent*, a slow-cooked baked beans stew; olives with *hyssop*, a mint-flavored herb; bitter herbs with pistachios; date charoset; and, most likely, walnut paste.

"Bitter herbs and charoset are typical Passover dishes, as is the *cholent*, mostly eaten during the holidays. Hyssop, on the other hand, was consumed daily," says the researcher.

The Gold Slippers

It was only four days before Christmas. The spirit of the season hadn't yet caught up with me, even though cars packed the parking lot of our local discount store.

Inside the store, it was worse. Shopping carts and last minute shoppers jammed the aisles. Why did I come today? I wondered.

My feet ached almost as much as my head. My list contained names of several people who claimed they wanted nothing but I knew their feelings would be hurt if didn't buy them anything.

Buying for someone who had everything and deploring the high cost of items, I considered gift-buying anything but fun. Hurriedly, I filled my shopping cart with last minute items and proceeded to the long checkout lines. I picked the shortest but it looked as if it would mean at least a 20 minute wait.

In front of me were two small children - a boy of about 5 and a younger girl. The boy wore a ragged coat. Enormously large, tattered tennis shoes jutted far out in front of his much too short jeans. He clutched several crumpled dollar bills in his grimy hands. The girl's clothing resembled her brother's. Her head was a matted mass of curly hair. Reminders of an evening meal showed on her small face.

She carried a beautiful pair of shiny, gold house slippers. As the Christmas music sounded in the store's stereo system, the girl hummed along, off-key but happily.

When we finally approached the checkout register, the girl carefully placed the shoes on the counter. She treated them as though they were a treasure.

The clerk rang up the bill. "That will be \$6.09," she said. The boy laid his crumpled dollars atop the stand while he searched his pockets. He finally came up with \$3.12. "I guess we will have to put them back," he bravely said.

"We will come back some other time, maybe tomorrow." With that statement, a soft sob broke from the little girl. "But Jesus would have loved these shoes," she cried. "Well, we'll go home and work some more. Don't cry. We'll come back," he said.

Quickly I handed \$3.00 to the cashier. These children had waited in line for a long time. And, after all, it was Christmas. Suddenly a pair of arms came around me and a small voice said, "Thank you lady."

"What did you mean when you said Jesus would like the shoes?" I asked.

The boy answered, "Our mommy is sick and going to heaven. Daddy said she might go before Christmas to be with Jesus." The girl spoke, "My Sunday school teacher said the streets in heaven are shiny gold, just like these shoes."

"Won't mommy be beautiful walking on those streets to match these shoes?"

My eyes flooded as I looked into her tear streaked face. "Yes" / answered, "I am sure she will."

Silently I thanked God for using these children to remind me of the true spirit of giving. 'Tis the Season!! Remember that it's better to give than receive.



Ask A Priest?

◆ Did St. Nicholas punch Arius at the Council of Nicea?

Most modern-day depictions of St. Nicholas paint him as a jolly old man, loving and kind, with a soft spot for children. However, in some medieval churches, as well as in Byzantine iconography, you will find an image of St. Nicholas slapping Arius at the Council of Nicea. Many Christians revel with delight at this scene and each year share countless memes that highlight St. Nick's boxing ability. Where did this tradition come from?

First of all, here is a basic retelling of the story from the 19th-century book, *The Reliquary & Illustrated Archaeologist*. *Although the most kindly and charitable of men, St. Nicholas had a temper and once gave very conclusive proof of the fact in the presence of three hundred bishops. It was at the great Nicean Council which was summoned for the purpose of putting Arius the Heretic to shame. This Arius in the course of his defence spoke of sacred personages with such scant reverence, that the Saint lost all patience and springing to his feet boxed his ears soundly.*

The medieval legends primarily report it as a "slap," instead of the usual "punch" that is often reported on social media. Historians have tried to trace the origins of this story and end-up only finding mention of it starting in the 14th century, nearly 1,000 years after the Council of Nicea.

Was St. Nicholas at the Council of Nicea? St. Nicholas died on December 6, 345, making it possible that as a bishop, he was present at the Council of Nicea in 325. However, his name was never on the roster of bishops who were present. The [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) states this plainly, "There is reason to doubt his presence at Nicea, since his name is not mentioned in any of the old lists of bishops that attended this council."

A biographer in the early 20th century also affirms this finding in the book, *Life of St. Nicholas*. *Tradition says not only that he was present in his old age at the Council of Nicea AD 325, but pictures him as the foremost figure of all, the outstanding opponent of Arius ... His name, however, is not on the list of those attending this Council and he is not mentioned in this connection by a single ancient historian.*

While it may be humorous to continue the legend of St. Nick socking Arius in the jaw, the story should be classified as a legend, and not a factual incident that demonstrates St. Nicholas' holiness.

◆ Why St. Josaphat was nicknamed the "thief of souls"

During a time of great division in the Church, St. Josaphat was very successful at "stealing" souls for God.

Ukraine in the 16th century was extremely volatile, with Christians aligning themselves on opposing sides. One group of Christians wanted to remain separated from Rome, while the other wanted to be fully united to the pope. St. Josaphat initially grew up on the side of Christians who wanted to stay cut-off from Rome, but eventually was attracted to the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church.

Pope Pius XI explains this initial attraction in his encyclical, *Ecclesiam Dei*. *From his earliest years he lived a saintly life. Although he was much impressed by the splendors of the Slavic liturgy, he always sought therein first and foremost the truth and glory of God. Because of this, and not because he was impressed by arguments, even as a child he turned towards communion with the Ecumenical, that is, the Catholic Church. Of this Church he always considered himself a member because of the valid baptism which he had received. What is more, he felt himself called by a special Providence to re-establish everywhere the holy unity of the Church.*

He took this divine mission seriously, and after being ordained a priest, strove to "capture" souls for the Church. St. Josaphat did this with gentleness and compassion, leading by his example of life

Concerned mainly with seeing his own people reunited to the See of Peter, he sought out every available argument which would foster and maintain Church unity. His best arguments were drawn from liturgical books, sanctioned by the Fathers of the Church, which were in common use among Eastern Christians, including the dissidents. Thus thoroughly prepared, he set out to restore the unity of the Church. A forceful man of fine sensibilities, he met with such success that his opponents dubbed him "the thief of souls."

St. Josaphat cared for everyone, practicing what he preached, doing all that he could for both the wealthy and the poor. *Marvelous in truth was the number of souls which he led back to the unity of the Fold of Jesus Christ, made up of all classes, peasants, merchants, nobles, prefects, and governors of provinces-a fact which is narrated by Sokolinski of Polotsk, by Tyszhkievich of Novogrodek, and by Mieleczko of Smolensk. After he was appointed bishop of Polotsk he extended greatly the field of his apostolate, an apostolate which could not but bring about extraordinary results due to the example which he gave of a life of inviolate chastity, poverty, and frugality joined with such openhandedness toward the poor that he even went to the length of pawning his own omophorion [the vestment of an Eastern bishop] in order to care for their needs.*

The Ukrainian Saint St. Josaphat whose relics we have in our church on the side altar, continues to be an inspiration to us all and an example of how to achieve unity within the Church. It must be done so through dialogue, but most of all, through a holiness of life.





Дорогі у Христі!

Щирозадушено вітаю усіх Вас з Різдвом Христовим та Наступаючим Новим 2022 Роком!

Святкуючи цьогоріч Різдво Господа нашого Ісуса Христа, не забуваймо, що він прийшов на цей світ у скромному вертепі, де заледве приємно пахло, але саме він став тим, хто наповнив усю землю запахом миру, запахом любові та великої надії. По суті всі новорічні та різдвяні свята, для більшості з нас є саме святами надії в те, що наступний рік буде прожитий краще.

Різдво — це не кутя та дідух під столом, Різдво — це можливість відкрити своє серце для тих, хто в цю хвилину проинятий диким запахом самотності.

Відкриймо **очі**, щоби побачити зорю, яка веде до новонародженого Спасителя; відкриймо наші **вуха**, щоби почути пісню прослави дивного на висотах Бога; відкриймо **уста** наші, щоби славити Творця та підбадьорювати один одного — бо Христос народився!; відкриймо наші **серця** і вони стануть, нехай убогою, зате затишною оселею для Богочоловіка! Бажаю Вам радісних та благословених свят! *о.Іван - Парох*

Ласкаво просимо додому!

Вітаємо вас у нашій парафіяльній спільноті! Для всіх, хто втомився і хоче відпочити, для всіх, хто сумує і потребує розради, всім, хто самотній і кому потрібна дружба, надія, любов, для тих, хто шукає Спасителя, наша Церква відкриває широко двері в ім'я Господа Ісуса Христа. Підійдіть до пароха о. Івана, або ж завітайте до парафіяльної канцелярії, щоби представити себе і зареєструватися і стати парафіянином. Ми з нетерпінням чекаємо зустрічі з вами!

Кава.

Запрошуємо всіх на каву та солодке після Божественної Літургії.

КОНВЕРТКИ І КАЛЕНДАРІ НА 2022 РІК

Парафіяльні конверти є готові і можете їх собі взяти вже сьогодні після Літургій у церковному залі. Просимо, коли будете брати свої конверти, слідкуйте уважно, щоби взяти правильну коробку конвертів. Хто бажає **СТАТИ НАШИМ ПАРАФІЯНИНОМ** або **ПАРАФІЯНКОЮ** і отримати конверти прошу звернутися до о. Івана на каві чи зателефонувати йому.

ПРОСФОРА - Святий Вечір.

У нашій парафії у Четвер 6 Січня 2021 року ми будемо мати Різдвяну Просфору - Свату Вечерю у 7-год вечора у колі нашої парафіяльної сім'ї. Вечеря буде безкоштовною для усіх наших парафіян, але хто може просимо зложити при вході жертву у кошик. Також до 31 Грудня ви повинні записатися у формі яка є на столику при вході до церкви для того щоби ми могли знати скільки їжі приготувати.

Різдв'яна пожертва

Дорогі парафіяни, у цей подарунковий передріздв'яний час не забуваймо і про обдарування нашої Церкви, як ми це робимо для наших рідних. Кожен Ваш дарунок-пожертва буде високо оціненим і Господь Вас винагородить сторицею.

Подяка

Складаємо нашу щирю подяку усім, які протягом пандемії фінансово підтримували і підтримують нашу Парафію. Нехай Всемилостивий Господь благословить Вас щедрими ласками за Вашу доброту! Молимося за всіх Вас, за нашу Церкву, за Україну, за страждаючих і немічних, за мир і спокій людям цілого світу! Бережіть себе і своїх — будьте здорові та забезпечені!

Похорон

Просимо зконтактуватися зі священником перед тим, як домовлятися з похоронним директором. При нашій парафії ми маємо свій власний цвинтар (кладовище) де після смерті можна бути похованим, якщо ви є зареєстрованим парафіянином. Якщо бажаєте придбати місце, звертайтеся до канцелярії 732-827-0767



7-го Січня, 2022
(Юліанський календар)
Різдво Христове - 9:00 а.т. Служба Божа

Питання до Священника

- **Скажіть отче, коли вперше почали святкувати Народження Христа в конкретний день?**

Ви не повірите, але перші триста років існування християнства ніхто не святкував Різдва Господнього, ба навіть не цікавився датою народження Ісуса... Першу згадку про Різдво знайшли в римському календарі свят за 354 рік. З того часу походить і перше зображення маленького Ісуса в катакомбі святого Себастьяна.

Наскільки відомо, перші християни не знали точного Дня Народження Ісуса Христа. У ранній Церкві, Тайну Народження Сина Божого християни згадували разом із святом Богоявлення. Після 4 ст в Римській імперії, щоби витіснити культ поклоніння сонцю і пов'язане з ним свято в дні зимового сонцестояння, на 25 грудня було встановлено урочистість Народження Христа.

- **Отче, коротко що саме ми саме святкуємо у день Різдва Христового?**

Якщо дивитися на Різдво з суто церковної точки зору, з богословської, євангельської, то цього дня ми святкуємо День народження Спасителя — народжується Богочоловік, Бог стає людиною, і це — велике свято, яке змінило хід світової історії. Різдво — це втілення Божого Сина, а отже Божого Слова. Про це говорить Йоан Євангеліст: «Слово стало Тілом, і перебувало між нами» (Ін 1,14). Тайна втілення відбувається у конкретній реальності, в конкретному часі, місці й культурі.

- **В якому місті народився Ісус Христос?**

Коли наближався час народження Ісуса, римський цар Август видав наказ — зробити перепис населення на всіх своїх владарюваннях, на всіх своїх землях. Кожна людина мусила піти у своє місто або в місто своїх пращурів, щоби записатися там згідно з переписом.

Йосип — чоловік Марії — походив із дому і роду царя Давида, який народився у Вифлеємі близько 1085 року до Різдва Христового і правив Юдеєю та Ізраїлем з 1055 до 1015 року. Через те Йосип із своєю дружиною Марією, яка була вагітна, відправилися із Галілейського міста Назарету до Юдейського міста Вифлеєму.

Коли Йосип з Марією прийшли до Вифлеєму, то місця у заїжджому дворі (типу готелю) для них не було, оскільки багато інших людей водночас теж прийшли для перепису, щоби виконати наказ імператора. Подвір'я і будинки Вифлеєму були переповнені гостями. Переночувати було ніде. Йосип із Марією та її інші мандрівники прийшлися у печері, в яку на ніч пастухи загнали свої отари овець.

Перебуваючи вночі у печері поміж отар, настала пора Марії родити. І ось десь опівночі роздався плач і народила Марія свого Первістка — Сина Людського. Люди, що теж ночували в печері з Йосипом та Марією, взяли малюка, сповили його одежею, яку задалегідь приготвила Марія, і поклали в ясла, з яких годували отари. Йосип із Марією дуже раділи, бо вони знали, що Немовля Бог послав їм для спасіння всього світу. Коли Ірод дізнався, що в Вифлеємі народився цар Ізраїлю, то вирішив убити його. Йосипу уві сні з'явився ангел, який сказав йому, щоби забрав Марію і дитину і втік до Єгипту. Коли цар Ірод помер, Йосип з Марією та Ісусом повернулися до Юдеї і оселилися в Назареті.

- **Що символізують в Біблії золото, ладан та смирна, що їх подарували новонародженому Христу-Дитині мудреці?**

У Біблії не пояснюється, чому мудреці принесли саме ці дари, але всі вони мали практичне і, ймовірно, символічне значення для Сина Божого і його земних батьків.

Золото - *Практичне застосування:* Для молодого подружжя, якому невдовзі потрібно було мати кошти для подорожі до Єгипту, щоби уникнути гніву Ірода, золото було дуже цінним подарунком.

Символічне значення: Золото, як правило, дарували царям (див. 1 Царям 9:14, 28), тому що воно символізує царювання і велич. Це був належний дар Царю царів (1 Тимофію 6:15).

Ладан - *Практичне застосування:* Крім того, що ладан мав значну матеріальну цінність, він використовувався як пахощі й парфуми.

Символічне значення: Ладан виробляють з пахучої смоли дерева, і його використовували для обрядів священства, під час цілопалень (див. Левит 2:1), і додавали в олію для помазування священників. Отже, це може символізувати священство Господа і його роль Агнца Божого, Якого буде принесено за нас (див. Іван 1:29).

Смирна - *Практичне застосування:* Смирна — це гірка олія, що виготовляється зі смоли дерев, і вона також є дуже коштовною, але, ймовірно, для Марії та Йосипа була більш корисною завдяки своїм медичним властивостям.

Символічне значення: У Новому Завіті смирна, завдяки своїм зберігаючим властивостям, як правило, згадується у зв'язку з бальзамуванням і похованням (див. Іван 19:39-40). Медичне застосування смирни може символізувати роль Христа як Візирцевого Цілителя, а її використання під час поховань може символізувати "гірку чашу", яку Він випив за нас, коли відстраждав за наші гріхи.

