



On the eighth day of the Feast of the Nativity, which also happens to be the beginning of the civil new year, the Church celebrates the Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His receiving of the name Jesus, which means Saviour. The Church's Liturgy tells us that Jesus underwent circumcision in order to fulfil the Law of Moses.

In being circumcised, Jesus Christ identifies completely with sinful human beings, showing the divine humility that even submits to the high priest's knife. And, in submitting Himself to the Law, He frees us from the law and from the ritual that was based on the law. As the Church chants at Matins on this day:

“Circumcision has ceased, for Christ was circumcised of His own will, granting the nations remission of sins, and saving them by grace.”

### *Readings and saints for this week:*

**Monday:** 2 Timothy 2:20-26; Mark 12:13-17  
Great Martyr Anysia; Gideon the New

**Tuesday:** 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-4; Mark 12:18-27  
Apodosis of Nativity; Righteous Melania

**Wednesday:** John 10:1-9; Colossians 2:8-12; Luke 2:20-21, 40-52  
Circumcision of Jesus Christ; Basil the Great

**Thursday:** Hebrews 5:4-10; John 3:1-15  
Forefeast of Epiphany Begins; Pope Sylvester

**Friday:** Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Luke 3:1-18  
Prophet Malachi; Martyr Gordios

**Saturday:** 1 Timothy 3:13-16; 4:1-5; Matthew 3:1-6  
Synaxis of the 70 Apostles; Theoctistus the Righteous

*Sunday 29 December 2013 is the Sunday after the Nativity of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ*

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 24:13-35

**Epistle:** Galatians 1:11-19

**Gospel:** Matthew 2:13-23

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

When you went down to death, O immortal life, then you slew Hades with the lightning flash of your Godhead; but when from the depths below the earth you raised the dead, all the Powers above the heavens cried out: 'Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!'

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Archbishopric of Good Hope,  
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

# Evangelion

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

29 December 2013

## The Light Shines in the Darkness

On Christmas day we celebrated the coming of Christ who shines as a Light in our world. Saint John tells us in his Gospel that Jesus Christ is the true Light who enlightens everyone who comes in to the world. (1:9) This celebration of light continues until the Great Feast of the Theophany on 6 January, when we commemorate Christ's baptism in the Jordan, which is also known as a feast of light.

However, today's Gospel reminds us of less pleasant events around Christ's birth. Indeed, having celebrated the joyful tidings of His birth, and the peace which He brings to all people, the Church's Liturgy has reminded us in the last few days of the reality of suffering in our world. On Friday, we commemorated Saint Stephen, the first martyr whose death is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (6-7). Yesterday, we commemorated the twenty thousand martyrs of Nicomedia who refused to worship idols. And today, we commemorate the holy children who were slaughtered by King Herod in his attempt to put to death the newborn Christ.

As we are celebrating the joy of Christmas, we are given this rather sober reminder that Jesus Christ was rejected on earth from His very first days. His birth brought joy to many, but the true Light which had shone into the world also brought opposition, for there are those who prefer darkness to the Light. There is nothing sentimental about the message of Christmas, for Christ's birth set in motion a series of events that will ultimately lead to His great victory over the forces of darkness in His death and resurrection. The Light continues to shine in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.



The truth has come! God is made manifest! He is born of the Virgin, enlightening those who sit in darkness, for the salvation of the world.

From Vespers of the feast of the Holy Innocents

# Homily on the Nativity of the Lord

by St John Chrysostom

I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn.

The Angels sing!

The Archangels blend their voices in harmony!

The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise!

The Seraphim exalt His glory!

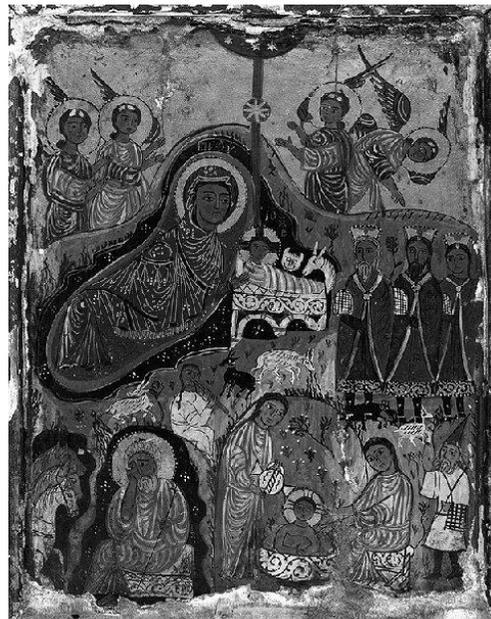
All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side the Sun of Justice.

And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, he had the power, He descended, He redeemed; all things move in obedience to God.

This day He Who Is, is Born; and He Who Is becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassibility, remaining unchanged.

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.



Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His Incarnation has he departed from the Godhead.

And behold,

- Kings have come, that they might adore the heavenly King of glory;
- Soldiers, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven;
- Women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of child-birth into joy;
- Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin, beholding with joy, that He Who is the Giver of milk, Who has decreed that the fountains of the breast pour forth in ready streams, receives from a Virgin Mother the food of infancy;
- Infants, that they may adore Him Who became a little child, so that out of the mouth of infants and sucklings, He might perfect praise;
- Children, to the Child Who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod;
- Men, to Him Who became man, that He might heal the miseries of His servants;
- Shepherds, to the Good Shepherd Who has laid down His life for His sheep;
- Priests, to Him Who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchisedech;
- Servants, to Him Who took upon Himself the form of a servant that He might bless our servitude with the reward of freedom;
- Fishermen, to Him Who from amongst fishermen chose catchers of men;
- Publicans, to Him Who from amongst them named a chosen Evangelist;
- Sinful women, to Him Who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant;

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world.

Since therefore all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice. I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival. But I take my part, not plucking the harp, not shaking the Thyrsian staff, not with the music of pipes, nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ. For this is all my hope, this my life, this my salvation, this my pipe, my harp. And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels, sing:

***Glory to God in the Highest;***

***and with the shepherds: and on earth peace to men of good will.***