

Nov. 15: Archangel Gabriel means "God is mighty."

✘ Gabriel was appointed the messenger from God to announce to the Virgin Mary she would give birth to a baby who would be the Saviour of the world. (Luke 1:26-35)

✘ He taught Moses in the wilderness to write the Book of Genesis.

✘ Gabriel announced the conception of the Virgin Mary to Joachim and Anna.

✘ He told Zacharias of the birth of John the Forerunner, and said: *'I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God.'* (Luke 1:19)



Nov. 16: Holy Apostle & Evangelist Matthew



was from Galilee, the son of Alphaeus, and originally named Levi. He was a tax collector for the Roman government until he met Jesus who said to him, *"Follow Me."* He gave up wealth and power to follow Jesus. After the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he was appointed to bring the Gospel to his fellow Jews. According to the

Church's tradition, he wrote the Gospel, in the Aramaic language, eight years after the Ascension. Matthew means "the gift of God." By spreading God's word, he became a gift of God to others. (Matthew 9:9)

Nov. 17: The Bright Star in the East guided the wise men and the shepherds to the place where Jesus lay so that they could bow down and worship Him.



"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." Matthew 2:1-2

From the Nativity Troparion we learn that *"Those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship You, the Sun of Righteousness."*

Nov. 18: The Dove is a symbol of peace and of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. After the flood, the dove brought Noah an olive tree branch, which meant the earth was free of water and there would once again be peace. At the time of Jesus' baptism, He heard the voice of God the Father, and the Holy Spirit rested on Him in the likeness of a dove. (Luke 3:21-22). When we pray *"O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth..."* we are praying to the Holy Spirit.



Nov. 19: The Church is where we, the faithful, come together in Christ to worship God, hear the Gospel and receive the sacraments.

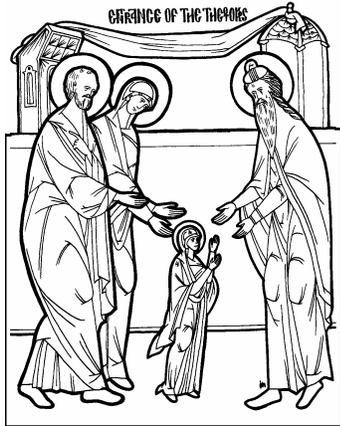


In Matthew 16:18 we read, *"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus said '... And I tell you, you are Peter, and this rock [Peter's proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God] I will build my Church."*

Nov. 20: The Christmas Tree got its start in the miracle plays of 14th & 15th century Europe performed in front of the cathedrals at Christmas time. The plays acted out the story of the Fall of Mankind and Salvation through Jesus Christ. The pine trees were decorated with apples symbolizing the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Later the trees were brought into the homes where the families decorated them with cookies, cakes, fruit, and goodies shaped to represent something from the Nativity. As time passed on the decorations were whatever one wanted. The Christmas tree was most popular in Germany then taken to other European countries in the 1800's and caught on in America by the 19th century. Today, it's not Christmas without a Christmas tree.



Nov. 21: The Presentation of Mary to the Temple



When the Virgin Mary was three, her parents Joachim and Anna took her to the Temple in Jerusalem. She lived there until she was about twelve years old. Through prayer and study, she prepared to become the Mother of Jesus. She heard what the prophets foretold and followed.

We are called to be like her, to "Hear the words of our Lord and to Follow."

We, too, are called to be *"Temples of God"*:

She carried Jesus in her womb.

We receive Him in the Eucharist/ Communion.

Nov. 22: Gifts are given at Christmas time, but the greatest gift of all is not under the tree! The greatest gift is God's gift to us, His Son, Jesus. We gave Jesus a gift at His birth, too.



In the Nativity Vespers, we hear:

"What shall we give You, O Christ, for You appeared on earth as a man for our sakes? Every creature whom You created offers You thanksgiving. The angels give You praise; the heavens, the star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, wonder; the earth, the cave; and we, the Virgin Mother."

Nov. 23: Joy to the World!



One of the carols we sing says, "Joy to the World, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room. And heaven and nature sing."

We are to keep the joy of Jesus in our hearts forever.

"And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people.'" Luke 2:10

Nov. 24: The *Green Wreath* is a sign of victory.



To Christians it represents Christ's victory over sin and death.

The color green means life.

The circle of green reminds us of eternal life that is ours in Jesus Christ.

Nov. 25: Great Martyr & Most Wise St. Katherine



was born in Alexandria, Egypt to a kind and wise king. She was very beautiful and well educated. After she became a Christian, she led many others to Christ. St. Katherine's ability to defend the Christian faith was so great that the 50 orators assigned to debate her and get her to change her mind recognized their error and asked for baptism.

She was tortured for her faith in Christ, and died a martyr's death in 305. Angels took her holy relics to the holy mountain of Sinai. When they were discovered many years later in the Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration of the Lord, which housed the Burning Bush, the Monastery was then dedicated to Saint Katherine.

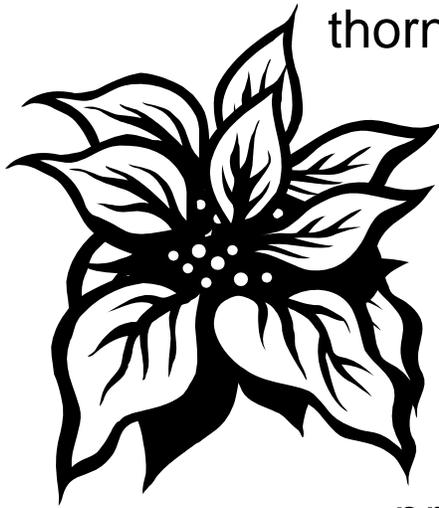
Nov. 26: St. Stylianos - a patron saint of children - was



born during the 7th century in the province of Paphlagonia into a poor but pious family. Stylianos wanted to serve Jesus to the fullest. He joined the hermits of the desert to spend his life in meditation and prayer. Unlike other hermits, he went among the people to help wherever he could.

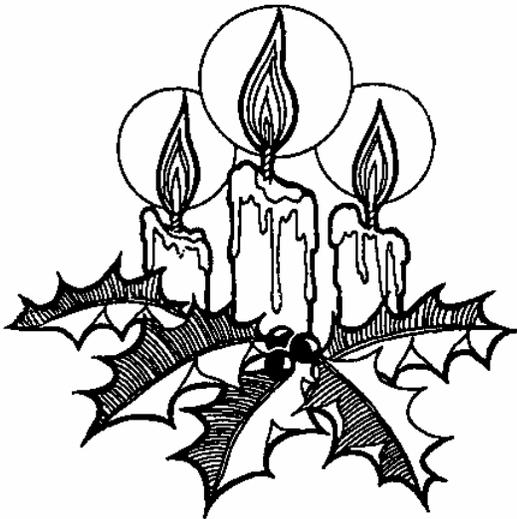
One night while praying, he felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. The next day he had a renewed spirit and sense of serenity. Besides counseling and comforting, he touched a sick child for the first time. The child was healed! After that day every sick and suffering person for miles around, came to St Stylianos. Many were healed. He lived to an old age.

Nov. 27: The Poinsettia reminds us of the crown of thorns Christ wore when He was mocked. The red leaves remind us of the blood Jesus shed for us.



Its use at Christmas comes from Mexico where it was traditional to leave gifts on the altar for Jesus on Christmas eve.

One night a poor boy that had no present, knelt outside the church window and prayed. In the spot where he knelt grew the poinsettia, also called "the Flower of the Holy Night."

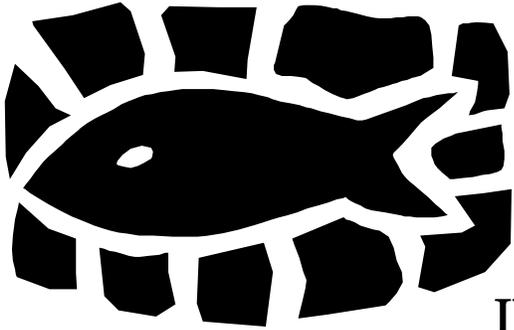


Nov. 28: The Candle reminds us that Jesus is the "Light of the World" and that we are to live as followers of the Light.

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

John 8:12

Nov. 29: The Fish was a secret sign used by Christians to let others know they believed that Jesus was the Son of God.



The Greek letters for fish - IXΘΥΣ (sounds like ICTHYS) - stand for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior."

Jesus told His disciples that He would make them "*Fishers of Men.*" Matthew 4:19

Nov. 30: Apostle Andrew the First-Called



was a fisherman from Bethsaida on Lake Gennesaret. Andrew left his fisherman's trade to become a disciple of St John the Baptist. Soon after the Forerunner baptized Jesus, John said to Andrew and another disciple, "*Behold the Lamb of God!*"

For being the first to recognize Jesus as the Christ, St Andrew is called the "First-Called."

After Pentecost, he was appointed to preach around the Black Sea, in Thrace and Macedonia. Later he traveled with John the Beloved throughout Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, back to Sinope on the Black Sea, and finally to Patras in the Peloponnese, where he established a large community. He was crucified head downwards on an X-shaped cross. His holy relics were returned to Patras in 1964, where they are now venerated in the great Church of St. Andrew.

Dec. 1: St Romanos the Melodist of



Constantinople was born in Emessa in Syria, of Jewish parents. He served as a deacon in Beirut, then in Constantinople at the time of Patriarch Euphemius (490-496). He was illiterate, had no musical training and was a poor singer. One night, after Romanos had prayed to the Mother of God, she appeared to him in a dream, held out a piece of paper and told him to swallow it. On the following day, the Nativity of Christ, Romanos went to the ambon and, with an angelic voice, sang "*Today the Virgin gives birth...*," the Kontakion of the Feast. Everyone was amazed at the beauty of the hymn and of Romanos' singing. He went on to compose more than a 1000 Kontakia. He reposed, while still a deacon of the Great Church in Constantinople in 556.

Dec. 2: The Candy Cane looks like the staff that the shepherd uses to bring his sheep back into the flock.

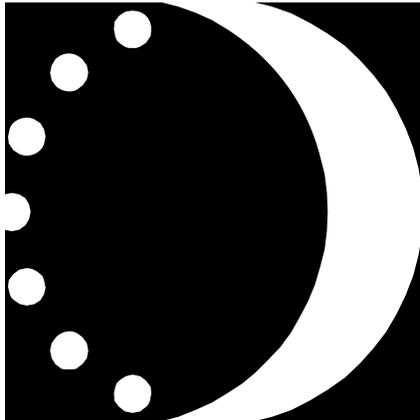


Jesus is our Good Shepherd who brings us back to God.

The white stripe reminds us of Jesus' innocence. The red stripe reminds us of the blood he shed for us.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." John 10:11

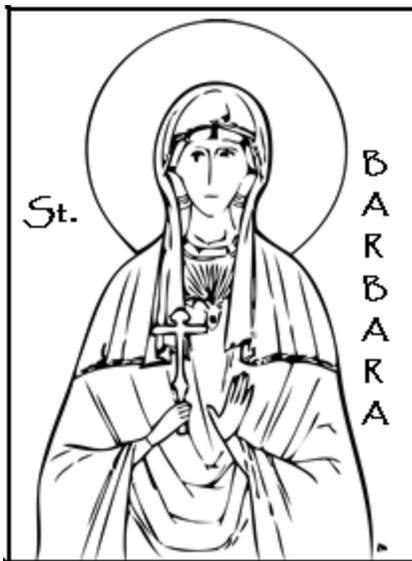
Dec. 3: The Moon shone brightly on the night Jesus was born.



him?"

"When I look at the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You established; what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"
Psalm 8:3, 4

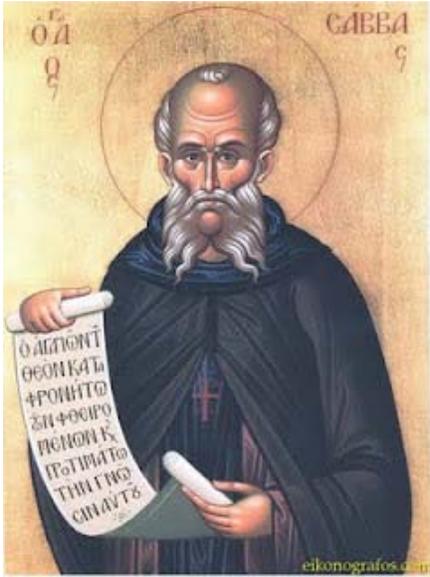
Dec. 4: St. Barbara was from Heliopolis of



Phoenicia and lived during the reign of the Roman Emperor Maximian. She was the daughter of a pagan named Dioscorus. When her father found out about her faith in Jesus, he turned her over to the authorities to be punished.

She would not give up her faith, so she was tortured and killed in the year 290. She is the patron saint of fire and sudden death.

Dec. 5: St. Savas the Sanctified was born in 439 in



Moutalaska, a small village of Cappadocia. He dedicated his life to Jesus as a monk at a very early age. The Patriarch of Jerusalem asked him to oversee the monasteries in the deserts of Palestine.

In his old age, he went to Constantinople, for the Council of Chalcedon.

His monastery founded the Typicon (order of services) for our church. He lived 94 years and died in 533.

Dec. 6: St. Nicholas the Wonder-worker,



Archbishop of Myra was born in Lycia (Asia Minor) near the end of the 3rd century, to pious Christian parents. His uncle, Archbishop Nicholas, ordained him a priest. When his parents died, he secretly gave away all of his inheritance to the poor. In turn, God granted him great gifts of healing and wonderworking. While still alive, he miraculously appeared in distant places to save the lives of faithful people.

He was elected Bishop of Myra just before the great persecutions under Diocletian & Maximian (c.305) and the Arian heresy. St Nicholas was one of the 318 Bishops at the Council of Nicea in 325. He died around 345 and his holy relics are in Bari, Italy and at St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Flushing, NY. Fragrant myrrh gathers from the casket containing his holy relics.

Dec. 7: Bells will chime and remind us that soon it will be Jesus' birthday.



The bell has a tongue and so do we. Just as the bells "sing out," we are to "sing out" / preach the Gospel to all nations.

"And He said to them, 'Go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

Mark 16:15-16

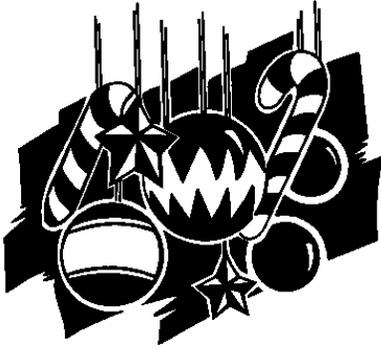
Dec. 8: The Stable Animals rejoiced and bowed down to worship the Baby Jesus when He was born.



The prophet Isaiah (1:3) wrote, *"The ox knows his owner and the ass [donkey] his master's crib."*

Camels, goats, sheep, horses and donkeys have all been associated with the Nativity story, although only sheep are mentioned. Most recreations of the Nativity include some, if not all, of these animals.

Dec. 9: Ball-Shaped Ornaments remind us Jesus



came for people throughout the world. Ornaments come in different colors just like people come in different colors, with different customs and traditions.

The earliest ornaments were edible goodies, fruits and nuts, then cookies, candy and cakes. Flowers and paper decorations provided non-edible beauty. Next were commercial ornaments that held good things to eat, some shaped like cornucopias.

When the goodies got too heavy for the tree, German glassblowers made the first glass ornaments. Most importantly, the Christmas tree was used to display the presents – small toys, candies, and other treats hung from the boughs.

Dec. 10: The Christmas Stocking reminds us of the



story of St. Nicholas and the three bags of gold. On two different occasions, he secretly tossed bags of gold through the window of the home of a poor man.

The daughters needed gold for their dowries. (In those days young women had to have money before a man would marry them, a dowry.)

On the third attempt, the father caught St. Nicholas. Tradition says the bags of gold fell into the girls' stockings that were hanging on the fireplace mantle to dry!

Dec. 11: Angels played three important roles in the Christmas story.

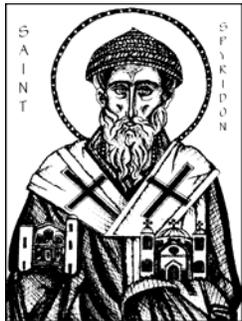
- ✘ The Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was chosen to give birth to God's Son, the Messiah (Luke 1:26)
- ✘ An Angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream to tell him that this baby was special (Matthew 1:20).



- ✘ A choir of angels came to the shepherds to announce the good news of our Saviour's birth. *"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men.'"* Luke 2:13-14

We, too, should go out to tell the joyful news of Jesus birth to all people.

Dec. 12: St. Spyridon the Wonderworker



was a humble shepherd living on the island of Cyprus with his wife and daughter. Though poor, his house was always open to travelers and those in need. When his wife, daughter and later, the bishop died, the people unanimously chose Spyridon to be their bishop. He kept his simple life while fulfilling his duties as bishop. In his icon, he wears bishop's vestments and a peasant's woven straw hat, a sign of his humility. He attended the 1st Ecumenical Council in 325. St. Spyridon did many miracles while he lived. He died in 348 at the age 78. His relics were moved to Constantinople in the 7th century & to Corfu in the 15th century. After 1,664 years, his body is intact and works many life-giving wonders. St. Spyridon is venerated as the Patron of Corfu.

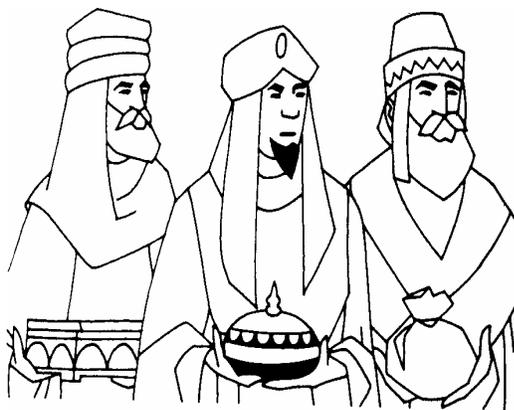
Dec. 13: St. Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska

was born near Moscow in 1756 to a pious family. He became a monk in 1783 and entered the Valaam Monastery (Finland today). He lived a hermit's life. In 1793, Herman was chosen for an 8-man missionary team to Alaska. The native Aleut people soon loved Christ. Life was very difficult. The monks had to walk to the different villages to teach the Gospel. Some people who did not believe caused trouble. Seven monks died or left.

Left alone, St. Herman settled on Spruce Island near Kodiak. As a hermit, he lived in a cabin in the forest. He spent his days in prayer, mission work and fasting (blackberries, mushrooms and vegetables). He founded an orphanage and a school for the natives of the island, cared for the sick in epidemics, and built a chapel. Saint Herman died in 1836, at age 81. He is American's first saint.



Dec. 14: The Magi/Wise Men were the first non-



Jewish people to believe in Christ. They were guided to Bethlehem by a bright Eastern star. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Baby Jesus. They welcomed Jesus into

the world. Let us welcome Him into our hearts with song and prayer.

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem..." Matthew 2:1

Dec. 15: Shepherds take care of the sheep in the fields, protecting them from wild animals like lions and wolves.

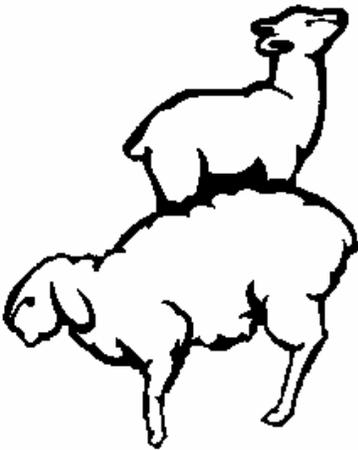


They were surprised and excited to have the angels give them the message of the birth of the Saviour, Jesus. They knelt and worshipped Jesus, then went to tell other people the good news.

"And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear." Luke 2:8-9

Jesus is our Shepherd.

Dec. 16: Sheep are gentle animals that are especially useful to people because of their wool, milk, meat.



Sheep need to be cared for by shepherds or else they wander off and can be lost or eaten by wild animals.

We are like the sheep, and Jesus is our Shepherd.

"And the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'"

John 1:29

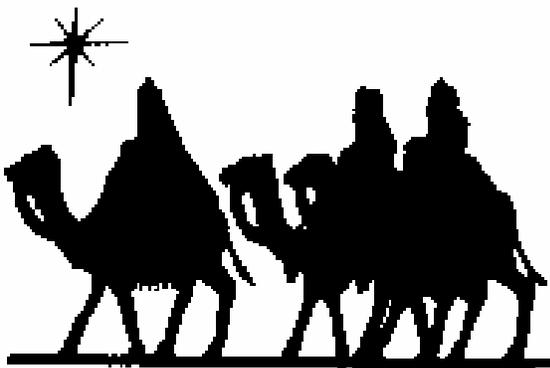
Dec. 17: The Prophet Daniel



belonged to the tribe of Judah. In 605 B.C., he and his 3 friends were captives of King Joakim in Babylon. The King chose them for service and raised them in the palace. Three years later, Daniel interpreted a dream of the new King, Nebuchadnezzar and was made governor of all Babylon. His enemies falsely accused him and he was thrown into a lions' den, but God protected him and closed the lions' mouths.

Daniel prophesied about the coming of Christ. He died at age 80, two years after the Hebrew people returned from their captivity in Babylon. According to tradition, Daniel and his three friends – the Three Holy Youth - were among the righteous dead who rose at Christ's Crucifixion and were seen by many. (Matthew 27)

Dec. 18: The Camels were created by God especially to work and live in the desert.



The three Wise Men rode on camels to follow the Star and find the newborn Jesus. The camels quietly praised Jesus, too.

"And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening..."

Genesis 24:11

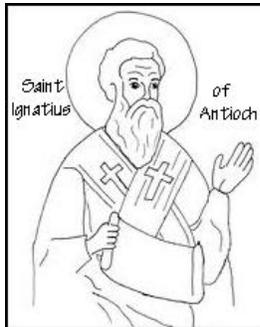
Dec. 19: The Donkey was commonly used for transportation in Bible times. Although the donkey is not recorded in the Nativity story, the icon of the flight into Egypt shows Mary and Jesus on a donkey. Most pictures / icons of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem include a donkey.



Also, Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on a foal (colt) of a donkey.

The prophet Isaiah (1:3) wrote, "*The ox knows his owner and the ass [donkey] his master's crib.*"

Dec. 20: Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, Bishop of Antioch



Tradition claims that young Ignatius sat on Christ's knee when He explained to His followers that they must become as children to enter the Kingdom. Ignatius knew the Apostles personally and, with St Polycarp, was a disciple of St John the Evangelist. He was the 2nd Bishop of Antioch, capital of Syria, one of the largest cities in the world.

During the persecutions of Domitian, he strengthened the faithful and brought many pagans to Christ. His flock called him the "God-bearer," because he said; "*all Christians are truly Bearers of Christ.*" During a time of peace, Bishop Ignatius worked at organizing the young Church. En route to his martyrdom in Rome, he wrote letters to the young churches. We can read these letters today.

Dec. 21: St. Joseph the Betrothed



Like Mary his betrothed, Joseph was of the house of David. A carpenter by trade, he had 7 children by his first marriage: sons James, Joses, Judas (Jude) and Simon (or Symeon); and daughters Esther, Martha and Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of the Apostles James and John. He was widowed in middle age and, in old age was chosen protector of the Virgin Mary by the high priest.

He was not warned of the pregnancy, but an Angel of the Lord told him God's plan in a dream. In another dream, he was instructed to flee to Egypt with the Theotokos and the infant Christ, to escape Herod's plans. We know that St. Joseph lived at least until Christ's 12th year (Luke 2:41-52).

Dec. 22: St. Anastasia was born in Rome to a very



wealthy family. Her mother was a Christian and taught her about God. She loved Jesus and used her money to help the poor and the sick and serves as an example for us. At night, she would dress as a poor working woman to visit and help the many Christians in prison, who later died as martyrs.

St. Anastasia died for believing in Jesus. Her relics were taken to Rome and later Constantinople and laid in a church bearing her name where they worked many miracles. Because she has healed many through her prayers from the effects of poisons and potions, she is called Pharmocolytia, "Deliverer from Potions." She died in 290 AD.

Dec. 23: The Virgin Mary /Theotokos.



When Mary was several months pregnant, she visited her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with St. John the Baptist.

When *Elizabeth* greeted Mary she said, "*Hail Mary, full of grace! Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*" We know that Mary gave birth to Jesus, the Saviour.

Orthodox Christians call the Virgin Mary, Theotokos -"Mother of God" or "Bearer of God." She is the *perfect example* for all of us humans. She loved God first, lived a godly life, studied the Faith and said "Yes" to God.

Dec. 24: The Baby Jesus. *"Away in the manger, no crib for a bed. The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where He lay. The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay."*

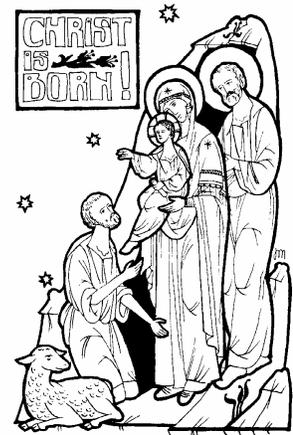


When the shepherds heard the angel's message of the Baby Jesus' birth, they quickly went, "*and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.*"

Luke 2:16

Dec. 25: The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child!"



Nativity Kontakion of St. Romanos the Melodist

Christmas Greeting

Christ is Born!

Glorify Him!