



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 110 January 2018

Gaudete! Gaudete!

Christus est natus ex Maria Virgine
Gaudete!



Rejoice! Rejoice!

Christ is Born of the Virgin Mary
Rejoice!

The Date of Christmas

It is often said that 25 December was chosen as the date for Christmas, not because it was the actual day of Christ's birth, but because there was a pagan festival at this time of year due to its being the time of the winter solstice (the date on which the day is shortest and the night longest, thus the time at which the days begin to lengthen again). But on careful investigation, this proves not to be true.

The writings of St John Chrysostom are invaluable in teaching us the truth. The Eastern part of the Church, of which St John was a part, began to celebrate Christ's Nativity after the Western part, and St John states that those in the West had always celebrated it on this date, because they had known from the beginning that it had been the actual day of Christ's birth. How did they know? Because Christ had been born in the Roman Empire, and as we know, this Empire kept meticulous records. Of course, most of these have now been lost, but at the time of Chrysostom, and before, it is not at all unbelievable that the record of the census mentioned in the gospels should still have been existent. And this is precisely what the saint confirms to be true:

'And it is possible for the person who so wishes to read the ancient codices which are publicly stored in Rome, and to learn the time of the census. Someone might say, 'how is this relevant to us, who are neither there nor have visited?' But listen, and do not be disbelieving, as we have received the day from those who have accurate information concerning these things, and who live in that city. For the ones who spend their lives there have observed this day from early times and ancient tradition, and have handed down their knowledge to us.'

So here we have testimony that, from the earliest times, the exact day was celebrated as the Birthday of the Saviour, because it was known that it was the real date. But that is not the only evidence St John employs. He then continues his argument from a biblical perspective, explaining the Jewish tradition of the censuring of the Temple in Jerusalem by the high priest, who would enter the Holy of Holies only once a year (Hebrews 9:7; Lev 16:29-34) during the Feast of Tabernacles in September. He points to the Gospel of Luke, 1:8-15, when Zacharias was selected to enter the Holy of Holies to offer incense. Zacharias entered the Holy of Holies to offer incense and there he had a vision of an angel of the Lord who announced to him the birth of his son, whom he was to call John. Soon after that, Elizabeth, his wife, became pregnant. Continuing with the biblical narrative, Chrysostom points out that six months later, the angel Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary and announces to her that she will bear the Son of God and also reveals to her that her cousin Elizabeth is already in her sixth month of pregnancy (Luke 1:30-37). Chrysostom concludes that Elizabeth became pregnant in the latter part of September (after the Feast of Tabernacles) and the Virgin Mary became pregnant six months later in the latter part of March. If we count nine months from that time we end up at the latter part of December, which is the time when Jesus was born. Hence, the celebration of Christmas on December 25 is justified.

Note that the conception of Christ took place at the time of the Spring equinox (the time when the days and nights are of the same length), and the conception of St John was at the time of the Autumn equinox, (the other time of the year when this is the case). The fact that these four pivotal events in salvation history (the Conception of Christ, the Birth of St John the Baptist, The Conception of St John the Baptist and the Birth of Christ) occur at the four pivotal times in the solar year, is clearly providential. The Fathers say that Christ was born at the time when the days begin to lengthen, because of what St John the Baptist said of Him: 'He must increase...'. Likewise, St John was born at the time when the days begin to shorten because of what he said of himself: 'I must decrease.' The fact that these times have deep symbolic significance does not mean that they were somehow 'chosen' by men for that reason. Scripture is both factually true and imbued with deep, mystical meaning. Likewise, the times that God appointed for the great events in His plan for our salvation.

A Christmas Prayer

A prayer handwritten in English by the Royal Martyr, Tsaritsa Alexandra, and given to Charles Sydney Gibbes on Christmas, 1917, at the Royal Family's first place of exile — Tobolsk. Gibbes, an Englishman and tutor to the Tsar's children, would later become an Orthodox Christian monk and priest in his home country. The prayer is reproduced below exactly as in the handwritten original.

I pray
That Christ the Xmas King may stoop to bless,
And guide you day by day to holiness,
Your Friend in joy, your Comfort in distress;

I pray
That every cloud may lead you to the light,
And He may raise you up from height to height,
Himself the Day-Star of your darkest night;

I pray
That Christ, before whose Crib you bend the knee,
May fill your longing soul abundantly,
With grace to follow Him more perfectly.

1917

Tobolsk Alexandra

<http://orthodoxlife.org/prayers-and-services/christmas-prayer-empress-alexandra/>



Notes & Jottings

NATIVITY PUPPET SHOW

We are very grateful to our friends from the North London Russian Orthodox community, Victor, Elena and Timothy Levin, who brought their Nativity Puppet Show to us for its inaugural performance in English. After training Irina Dembri, Subdeacon Mark and Katy-Elizabeth Tattum-Smith in operating some of the puppets, the show was performed in the College Drawing Room on Sunday 31st December. The show was recorded by John Steel and will shortly be made available on-line.

CALENDARS

There are still a few copies of the St Herman Calendar 2018 in stock. This is a lectionary, in A4 size book form, giving details of the numerous saints commemorated every day and the daily scriptural readings. The retail price is £9 per copy. Also we have a few copies of the wall calendar – A2 poster showing the entire year. These are £5 each. Order now to avoid disappointment.

CHRISTMAS & THEOPHANY SERVICES

Mid-winter brings with it two wondrous Feasts of the Lord, the Feast of the Nativity on Sunday 7 January and Theophany on Friday 19th January. After the Liturgy on Christmas day, we will have a Christmas party in the College along with the singing of carols from around the world.

EPISCOPAL VISIT – 10am TUESDAY 30 JANUARY, 2018

Vladyka Irenei (Steenberg), the Administrator of our Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland, will be visiting us on Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th of January together with Schema-subdeacon Anthony. We last saw Vladyka when he brought the Myrhh-streaming Haiwaian Ikon of the Mother of God to us last ? However, this will be the first Liturgy he has served in our church and as such a very important occasion. This will also be the name day of Fr Antony on the Feast of his patron, St Anthony the Great. Please arrive as early as you can for confessions, Vladyka will be greeted in the church at 10am followed by the Hours and the Episcopal Divine Liturgy. After the Liturgy there will be a festal meal in the College and an opportunity to meet Vladyka. To all our friends near and far, please make an effort to come to this special day for our community.

MORE KEY DATES FOR 2018

Looking forward to next year, **Pascha is on Sunday 8 April**. Our Cathedral at Harvard Road in London will be consecrated and rededicated for the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God on **Friday 21 September**. Our Patronal Feast will be on **Tuesday 6 November** & Founder's Day will be on **Thursday 15 November**. Watch this space for the dates of our St Botolph's pilgrimage and other important dates for 2018.

NAMEDAYS

We send our congratulations to everyone who is celebrating a nameday at this time & wish them:

MANY YEARS!

2 January – **Repose of St John of Kronstadt** – John Steel

8 January – **St Joseph the Betrothed** – Joseph Meyer

9 January – **St Stephen the Protomartyr** – Stephen Masterson, Stephen Ward

15 January – **St Seraphim of Sarov** – Seraphim Collins,
Serafima Hopper, Seraphina Dembri

30 January – **St Anthony the Great** - Priest Antony Bardsley



**COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW**

JANUARY 2018

Saturday 6 January

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 7 January

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Feast of the Nativity)

followed by a Christmas Party in the College

Saturday 13 January

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 14 January

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Circumcision of Christ / St Basil the Great)

Approx. 2pm ~ Moleben to St Seraphim of Sarov

Thursday 18 January

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Friday 19 January

10.10am ~ Hours and Festal Liturgy with Blessing of Water (Theophany)

Saturday 20 January

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 21 January

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Zaccheus Sunday)

Saturday 27 January

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 28 January

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Publican and the Pharisee)

Monday 29 January

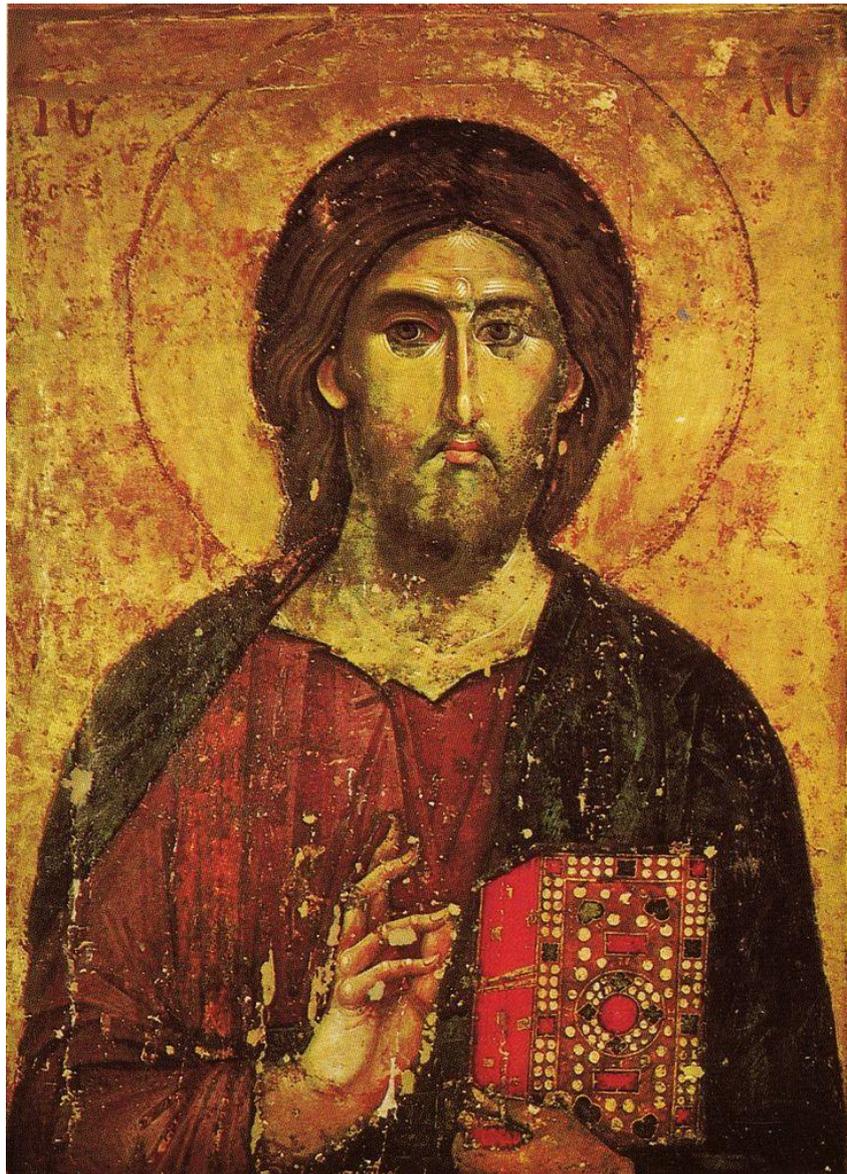
7.30pm ~ Vigil

Tuesday 30 January

10.00am – Greeting of Vladyka Irenei

10.10am – Hours & Episcopal Divine Liturgy (St Anthony the Great)

followed by a Festal Meal in the College



Christ did not come to earth to announce some novel theoretical propositions to mankind. No! He came in order to create a completely new life for mankind, that is, the Church. Christ Himself said that He would build the Church (Mt. 16:18).

New Hieromartyr Hilarion (Troitsky), Archbishop of Verey

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