

## PROGRAMME DECEMBER 2012

SATURDAY 1<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER: **Prophet Nahum**, Blessing of the waters, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.0am

MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

**MONDAY Evening:** **Great Celebratory Vespers in honour of St Barbara**, presided by His Grace Bishop Ezekiel of Derbis, accompanied by the Clergy and Faithful Christians of Melbourne. 7.00-8.30pm

**TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER:** **FEAST DAY OF THE GREATMARTYR ST BARBARA**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, served by His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Militoupolis and the Parish Clergy, 7.30-10.30am

WEDNESDAY 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **Saint Savas the Sanctified**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

THURSDAY 6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **St Nicholas of Myra the Wonderworker**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER: **Conception of St Anna mother of the Theotokos**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

TUESDAY 11<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **11<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LUKE, The holy Forefathers**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **St Spyridon the Wonderworker**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

THURSDAY 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

FRIDAY 14<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **St Eleutherios the Hieromartyr**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SUNDAY 16<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY** Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

MONDAY 17<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **St Dionysios of Zakynthos**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

TUESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

WEDNESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

THURSDAY 20<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **Ignatius the Godbearer**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

**Evening: Service of Holy Unction** (Blessing of Oil for spiritual healing of body and soul), and the veneration of the Holy Relics, 7.00-8.30pm

SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER: Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **Christmas Eve**, The service of the Royal Hours, Vespers and Divine Liturgy, 7.00-10.00am

**TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER:** **NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 5.00-8.00am

MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **Synaxis of the Theotokos**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **Protomartyr Stephen**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER: **St Joseph the Righteous**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am



## A Recent Appearance of the Theotokos in Bethlehem

This is the story of the miraculous appearance of the Panagia to a Muslim in Bethlehem on the first day of Holy Week 2012. The Orthodox monastic community of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem related this story to Mr. Lycourgos Markoudes who writes here as he heard it.

The story begins on Holy Monday afternoon when the Church of the Nativity was practically empty of pilgrims. The monks were in the area of the church where they attend to the needs of the church. This is a short distance from the steps that lead to the

Cave of the Birth of Christ. At one point, they saw a man approach them and he appeared to be very emotional. He took two candles and with great emotion he approached the icon of the Panagia of Bethlehem. He lit the candles before the icon and with tears flowing from his eyes he turned towards the monks who were looking at him with concern. He told them that he was a Muslim from the area around Bethlehem and that during the previous day he saw the Panagia in his sleep. The Panagia invited him to visit the place where She had given birth to Her Son and he was to enter the area through a low doorway. He was told to proceed to the right and then go to the area where he would find Her and then light two candles before her icon.

This man had not visited this church since he was a very young child and he did not remember anything about the church. When he arrived there on that afternoon, he left his car running with its emergency lights flashing in front of the main entrance of the church, in an area that has restricted parking. His wife had remained in the car. When he arrived, he proceeded to enter walking briskly toward the low doorway of the church. He realized as he was proceeding ahead that everything was exactly the way that our Panagia had described it to him. He then went right and down some stairs of Justinian's Church and he entered the

right area of the church. This is the area that is under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church and it leads to the Cave where Jesus was born. The icon of the Panagia was exactly in the place where She had indicated it would be. And the icon was exactly the same one he had seen in his dream.

It was the icon of the Panagia of Bethlehem. This miracle-working icon is the resident icon of the Church of Bethlehem and it is located on a prominent icon stand on the right side of the steps that lead to the Cave of the Birth of Christ. The facial features of this icon overflow with an infinite expression of love and calmness while the faint smile on her face brings joy to the hearts of pilgrims. The icon is surrounded with precious fabrics and jewels. There are no solid details about the origin of the icon but tradition says that it comes from Russia and it is connected with the Russian Empress Katherine. This Empress visited the Holy Land after a miracle that was performed by the Mother of God. As a result of this, she gave her imperial clothing so that the Mother of the World could be dressed in them. She also gave her jewelry so that they could be placed on the icon. She also directed that future empresses should not wear rubies so that henceforth this distinctive honor would only belong to the Panagia. This is the icon that this Muslim came to reverence when he arrived at the Church of the Birth of Christ late afternoon of Holy Monday. He naturally did not know how to speak Greek and the conversation with the monks was in Arabic.

This was unbelievable news that this Muslim brought to the monks. The monks offered him a small icon of our Panagia which he accepted with thanksgiving. He left the Church quickly, just the way he arrived, but he then returned again in a few moments. He had forgotten that Our Holy Mother had also told him that while entering the Church, he should see her friends on the columns of the Church. The monks then took him to see the columns of the Church which have icons of saints painted on them; some of these icons today are just shadows, some are blackened and others are completely faded. These are life size figures of the Saints of our Church. These are the friends of our Panagia.

After seeing the columns the Muslim again left quickly and has never again returned to the church. But the All-Holy One, the Mother of God and our Mother, through this miraculous occurrence came to show Her support for us so that we will have patience, hope and consolation and also to assure us that: "Her Son will come again and He will gather up all those who are close to Him." Let us, therefore, not dare to distance ourselves from Him, so that we can taste His salvation. Amen.



**14,000 Infants (Holy Innocents)  
Slain by Herod in Bethlehem**

The infant-slaying Herod mentioned here is the same one that ruled at the time of Christ's Nativity. In those days, certain Magi, who were wise and noble men, perhaps even kings, set forth from the East, and came to Jerusalem, seeking the King of the Jews, Who had been born; and they said that in the East, where their homeland was, an unusual and strange star had appeared two years before, which, according to an ancient oracle

(Num 24:17), was to signify the birth of some great king of the Jews. "For we have seen His star in the east," they said, "and have come to worship Him" (Matt. 2:2). Hearing these things, Herod was troubled, and the whole city together with him. Then, having inquired and been informed by the high priests and scribes of the people that, according to the prophecies, Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, he sent the Magi thither and ordered them that, when they would find the Child, to inform him, so that he also - as he affirmed - might go and worship Him.

But the Magi, after they had worshipped, departed by another way to their own country by a divine command. Then Herod was wroth and sent men to slay all the infants of Bethlehem and the parts round about, from two years old and under, thinking that with them he would also certainly slay the King Who had been born. But this vain man who fought against God was mocked, since Jesus the Child, with Mary His Mother, under the protection of Joseph the Betrothed, fled into Egypt at the command of an Angel. As for those innocent infants, they became the first Martyrs slain in behalf of Christ. But their blood-thirsty executioner, the persecutor of Christ, came down with dropsy after a short time, with his members rotting and being eaten by worms, and he ended his life in a most wretched manner.

**Apolytikion in the First Tone**

Be Thou entreated for the sake of the sufferings of Thy Saints which they endured for Thee, O Lord, and do Thou heal all our pains, we pray, O Friend of man.

**Kontakion in the Fourth Tone**

When the King was born in Bethlehem, the Magi arrived from the East with gifts guided by a Star on high, but Herod was troubled and mowed down the children like wheat; for he lamented that his power would soon be destroyed.

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**PROGRAMME DECEMBER 2012**



St Joseph the Righteous

**Apolytikion of the Nativity of Christ (December 25<sup>th</sup>)**

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone upon the world with the light of knowledge: For thereby they who adored the stars, through a star were taught to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee.

## **Sunday After Christmas: Joseph the Betrothed, James the Adelphotheos and King David**

The Holy Prophet-King David, St Joseph the Betrothed, and St James the Brother of the Lord are commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, their commemoration is moved to December 26.

At an early date, some churches in the East began to commemorate certain important figures of the New Testament at the time of Theophany, and later during the Nativity season. In Syria, for example, St Stephen (December 27), Sts James (April 30) and John (September 26), and Sts Peter and Paul (June 29) were commemorated near the end of December.

In Jerusalem, the saints mentioned above were combined with a feast that the Jews of Hebron celebrated on December 25 or 26 in honor of the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob. Later on, the Christians substituted St James (October 23) for Jacob, and then the commemoration of the Brother of the Lord became associated with his ancestor King David. In time, St. Joseph was linked with Sts David and James.

### **Saint Joseph the Betrothed**

Saint Joseph the Betrothed was of the lineage of King David. In his first marriage, he had four sons and two daughters. After he became a widower, St Joseph led a life of strict temperance. He was chosen to be the husband and guardian of the Most Holy Theotokos, who had taken a vow of virginity.

An angel told him of the Incarnation of the Son of God through her. St Joseph was present when the shepherds and the Magi worshiped the new-born divine Infant. On the orders of the angel, he fled into Egypt with the Mother of God and the Infant Jesus, saving them from the wrath of King Herod. He lived in Egypt with the Virgin Mary and the divine Child, working as a carpenter. St Joseph reputedly died at the age of one hundred.

St Joseph is commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, his Feast is moved to December 26. The Righteous Joseph is also commemorated on the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers.

### **Saint James the Brother of the Lord**

The Holy Apostle James, Brother of the Lord, was the eldest son of Joseph the Betrothed from his first marriage with Solomonia. The Apostle James is remembered after the Feast of the Nativity of Christ together with his father Joseph and the Prophet-King David, since he accompanied his family on the Flight into Egypt and lived there with the Infant Jesus, the Mother of God and Joseph. Later, he returned to Israel with them.

After the Ascension of the Lord, St James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, gaining the great esteem not only of Christians, but also of Jews. He was thrown from the roof of the Jerusalem Temple because he had publicly preached to the people about the God-manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Apostle James is also commemorated on October 23.

### **The Holy David the Prophet and King**

The Holy Prophet-King David was a forefather of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. The youngest son of Jesse, David shepherded a flock of sheep belonging to his father. He was distinguished by his deep faith, and he zealously fulfilled the will of God.

During a battle with the Philistines, he vanquished the giant Goliath in single combat, which decided the outcome of the war in favor of the Israelites. He endured many things from King Saul, who saw him as a favorite of the people and his rival. David, however, showed his own decency and magnanimity. Twice, when he had the possibility of killing Saul, he did not do so.

After Saul and his son perished, David was proclaimed king of the southern part of Israel, and after Saul's second son was killed, he became king of all Israel. He built a new capital, Jerusalem ("the City of Peace"), and a new tabernacle. His great wish to build a Temple was not realized. It was foretold to him that his son would build the Temple.

The life of the Prophet David was darkened by a grievous falling: he took Uriah's wife for himself, and sent Uriah to his death in battle. He was also an example of great repentance, humbly and with faith bearing the sorrows sent in punishment for his sins. St David gave a model for repentance in Psalm 50/51. King David died in great old age with steadfast faith in the coming of the promised Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. His divinely-inspired Psalter is widely used in the divine services and in personal prayers. (See the Books of Kings and Chronicles).

The holy Prophet-King David is invoked by those facing a difficult situation, such as an interview, etc.

### **Apolytikion in the Second Tone**

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph, to David, the ancestor of God: you saw a Virgin great with Child, you gave glory with the shepherds, you worshipped with the Magi, you received the news from the angel. Pray to Christ God to save our souls!