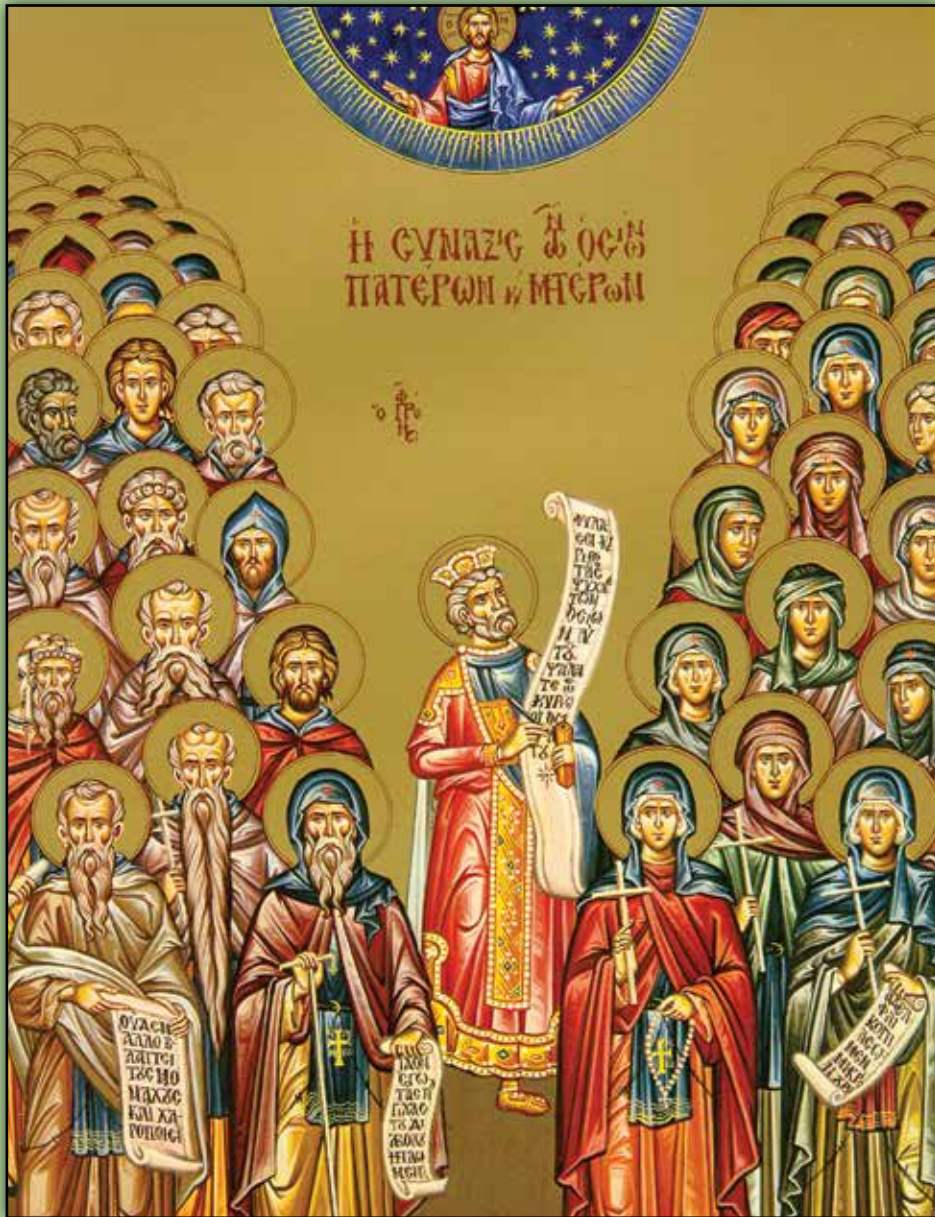


SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
SUNDAY OF THE ANCESTORS



Icon of the Holy Ancestors

December 21, 2025: Sunday Before Christmas

Epistle: Heb. 11: 9-10, 17-23 & 32-40

Gospel: Mt. 1: 1-25

This Weekend 4:00 pm + George Chowanec (Family)
10:30 For Our Parishioners

Mon., Dec. 22 9:00 + Debra Altier (Mother)

Tues., Dec. 23 9:00 Health & God's Blessings on Eileen Kushner (Family)

Wed., Dec. 24 **Christmas Eve**
10:00 pm For Vocations

Thurs., Dec. 25 **Christmas - Birth of Our Lord**
10:30 am For Our Parishioners

Fri., Dec. 26 **Synaxis of the Theotokos (Solemn Holy Day)**
9:00 + Dorothy Chezik (Family)

Sat., Dec. 27 **St. Stephen, Protomartyr (Simple Holy Day)**
9:00
No Confessions Today.
4:00 pm + Msgr. Stephen Hrynuck (Legate Liturgy)

Sun., Dec. 28 10:30 For Our Parishioners

CHRISTMAS PASTORAL LETTER

"The divine power is revealed today
in the great mystery of humility.

Almighty God is born as a helpless
Infant, so that through His weakness
He may show strength."

— *St. Gregory the Theologian,*
Homily on the Nativity

Christ is Born!

In the mystery of the Nativity,
the Lord of the universe, wrapped in
swaddling clothes, is laid in a manger
in a dark cave so that He may fill the
hearts of all who believe with unending
light. He, who needed nothing, freely
embraced poverty so that we might
learn to despise what the world calls
great and seek what heaven considers

truly precious.

Can we fathom the greatness of the Mystery of God's Incarnation? He who is incomprehensible to all creation today becomes visible as an Infant. He who is infinite begins life within time. He who holds the universe in His hands lies in a manger.

Today the shadow of ancient sin is scattered, for the light of the New Adam has shone forth. The earth, once cursed because of sin, now receives blessings through the Lord's Incarnation. He came not to judge but to save. Not to punish but to heal. Not to reject but to bring God's beloved children back into the Father's house.

The shepherds, who heard the voice of angels in the darkness of night, followed the light of the star—and that light did not remain merely external; it entered their hearts. As Gregory the Great writes: "He who truly finds Christ cannot return as the same person. They went out as shepherds of the flock, but returned as prophets."

The haste of the shepherds is a sign of a fervent search for truth. What they saw and heard so deeply moved them that, forgetting their flocks, they set out by night

for Bethlehem to understand the meaning of that light and to proclaim the Savior to others. Whoever seeks Christ does not delay. Seeing the Infant in the manger and recalling the words of the angels, they united Image and Word and recognized before them Emmanuel, which means "God-with-us" (Isaiah 7:14).

The faithful of our Church in Ukraine and throughout the world celebrate the Holy Nativity of Christ for the fourth consecutive year amid a terrible war. On December 25, 2025, we mark the 1401st day of the heroic struggle of the Ukrainian people following the full-scale Russian invasion. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost—soldiers, volunteers, women and children, the elderly; cities and villages have been destroyed; territories occupied; and the blood of the innocent slain by the Russian aggressor cries out to heaven. Above all, we long for true peace—peace that will halt the murderous fury of the red beast, the Herod of our days, who continues to feed on the blood of long-suffering Ukraine.

"In these fierce times of War we have so many reasons for sorrow and lamentation that we would

leave this world in suffering and without hope—if there were no Savior Christ... But when there is hope, then one can—indeed, must—rejoice in spite of every affliction.”

— *Venerable Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and Faithful, December 23, 1943*

As a Church, we face many challenges. The war in Ukraine has inflicted countless wounds. Therefore, we need the Physician—the Savior—who enters human history to be today with our defenders on the front lines, with the wounded in hospitals, with widows and orphans in their grief, and with the innocent slain in the Heavenly Kingdom.

America, too, needs healing, as it suffers from division, polarization, fragmentation, inequality, and many other trials.

Each of us longs for the healing love of God, which alone can mend the fractures in our souls, families, and communities.

The Lord is coming!

Let us open wide not only the doors of our hearts but also of our homes: let us welcome the hungry and thirsty, the displaced and those who have lost everything; let us warm the naked with our embrace, and serve the sick with love and patience. Let us pray for those who are in captivity and do all we can to make their voices heard in freedom.

We, too, hasten after the light of the star to find Christ—the Sun of Righteousness. Let us come with pure hearts to the Bethlehem Cave. Let us bring not gold and myrrh but faith, love, and humility. For those who draw near to Christ receive peace, joy, and new life.

May Christ who was born today illumine our souls, purify our hearts, and strengthen us on the path to salvation.

To Him be honor, glory, and worship forever.

**Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!**

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

ХРИСТОС РОЖДАЄТЬСЯ! СЛАВІМО ЙОГО!

Another Christmas is here. Let us reflect on the true meaning of this celebration. We will receive gifts, many will receive more than

others. But we will receive one gift equally. That is the gift of the Incarnate God. Let us acknowledge this unique gift by participating in as many of the special Christmas Services as possible and remembering the real reason for the season, and to pray for Peace on Earth!

May the Incarnate Christ, be with each and everyone of you



during this holiday season and throughout the year 2026. My prayers for your continued health and happiness.

Christ is Born! --
Glorify Him!

Христос
Рождается!
Славимо Його!

*Father
Nestor*

A WARM WELCOME

We warmly welcome all our visitors. It's good to have you with us! If you have never been to our Church before, you are about to participate in the Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated every Sunday of the year. Liturgy

means the work of the people. That means that we all have special and holy work to do today, and that all of your prayers are necessary! May the light of the newborn Christ shine upon you and may God's blessing be with you all.

PROPERLY RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

When approaching to receive Holy Communion, do not be afraid to approach the Priest. Father's arms are only so long and when you stand too far away, it is difficult to distribute Holy Communion.

We also remind everyone to tilt your head back and open your mouth WIDE. Please keep your tongue in your mouth. Please do not bite down on the communion spoon. There is no need to say anything since the

priest says the prayer. **There is no need to say AMEN as is done in the Roman Catholic Church.**

For those faithful who are a little unsteady on your feet, please feel free to use the first pew in front of the icon of the Mother of God. We don't want anybody to get hurt.

Father will come up and give you Communion.

Now finally, a little about the red Communion Cloth. Simply lift it up to your chin. The purpose of the Communion Cloth is to help prevent accidents.

CHRISTMAS GIFT TO YOUR CHURCH

During these days of Philip's Fast (Advent), we travelled with the Holy Family on their way to Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to the greatest gift in the history of humanity -- the Gift of Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God. The Three Wise Men bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Our Newborn Savior. What will be your special gift to Jesus on the occasion of his birth this Christmas? Will you more generously remember His Church -- Saints Cyril and Methodius, here on River St. in



Olyphant?

As Jesus was born in poverty and was dependent on others for His needs, so too is your church dependent on you to help meet its many needs. It is only through your generous financial support that we are able to plan ministries and programs, and

keep ahead with our bills, repairs, maintenance, and improvements to our buildings and property here at St. Cyril and Methodius Church. With great sensitivity to how difficult the current economic circumstances have been for so many, we still

hope and pray that you will be able to find it in your heart to remember

our Parish in your Christmas gift giving this year.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

We have one upcoming fundraiser scheduled. Please help our parish by participating to the best of your ability.

1. **BINGO AT THE MANOR ON MAIN:** Sunday, January 25, 2026. We're hoping that this will become one of our main annual fundraisers. To those generous parishioners who have pledged to sponsor

BINGO games, please submit your pledge as soon as possible. Checks payable to "St. Cyril's Church" can be dropped in the donation bin in an envelope marked "BINGO". Donations of gift baskets are welcomed. **TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE.** Call: Jule (570) 357-6171 or Michaelene (570) 209-2026.

2026 CHURCH CALENDARS

The 2026 Church Calendars are available in back of the Church.

The Calendars are free, but any donations will be appreciated.

FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS CAROLS

The annual Festival of Ukrainian Christmas Carols will be held on Sunday, January 11, 2026 at 3:00 pm at our Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate

Conception in Philadelphia. All are invited to attend this annual celebration to praise our new-born King and our Lord Jesus Christ at this Christmas time.

COLLECTION PROCESSING TEAM

The Collection Processing Team for the month of December

2025 is Team #4: Ron Barkofsky, Steve & Jeannie Cucura.

Sunday Collection for Dec. 13 & 14, 2025: \$

Sincere thanks to all of you for your kindness and generosity.

Ss. Cyril & Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church



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Rev. Nestor Iwasiw, Pastor

The Story of the Origin of Jesus Christ, Son of David, and the Rest of the Names

Matthew's genealogy is extraordinarily comprehensive in his theology of the roots of Jesus' story in the Old Testament. But that is only one part of the story of Jesus Christ. The story has a sequence as well; and the continuing sequence is what makes the genealogy "good news" for Matthew's audience and for us.

Human being have been empowered to preserve, proclaim, and convey the salvation brought by Jesus Christ throughout history. The God who wrote the beginnings with crooked lines also writes the sequence with crooked lines, and some of those lines are our own lives and witness.

A God who did not hesitate to use the scheming as well as the noble, the impure as well as the pure, men to whom the world hearkened and women upon whom the world frowned – this God continues to work through the same melange. If it

was a challenge to recognize in the last part of Matthew's genealogy that totally unknown people were part of the story of Jesus Christ, it may be a greater challenge to recognize that the unknown characters of today are an essential part of the sequence. The proclamation of that genealogy in the Advent liturgy is designed to give us hope about our destiny and our importance.

By stressing the all-powerful grace of God, the genealogy presents its greatest challenge to those who will accept only an idealized Jesus Christ whose story they would write only with straight lines and whose portrait they would paint only in pastel colors. If we look at the whole story and the total picture, the Gospels teach us that Jesus' ministry was not thus; the history of the church teaches us that the sequence as not thus. God's grace can work even with people like us.