



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

PARISH OF ST. VASILIOS - BRUNSWICK

Address all Correspondence to:
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
ST. VASILIOS
15-19 Staley Street
BRUNSWICK VIC 3056
Telephone: (03) 9387 7693
Fax: (03) 9380 5767

PROGRAM FOR CHRISTMAS HOLY SERVICES

Friday	23 DECEMBER	7.00am— Orthros, Royal Hours
Saturday	24 DECEMBER	6.00—8.30 am Vespers and Divine Liturgy followed by Holy Communion 5.00pm Vespers
Sunday	25 DECEMBER	NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST 5.00—8.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
Monday	26 DECEMBER	Synaxis of the Theotokos 7.00-9.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
Tuesday	27 DECEMBER	Protomartyr St Stephen 7.00-9.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
Saturday	31 DECEMBER	7.00pm Great Festal Vespers presided by His Grace Bishop Iakovos, of Militopolis
Sunday	1 JANUARY 2017	7.30pm Archieratical Divine Liturgy of St Vasilios officiated by His Grace Bishop Ezekiel of Dervis and Bishop Iakovos of Militopolis
Thursday	5 JANUARY 2017	7.00—11.00am Orthros, Hours, Vespers and Divine Liturgy followed by Great Agiasmos Service (Strict Fast)
Friday	6 JANUARY 2017	HOLY EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST 7.00—11.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy followed by Great Agiasmos Service
Saturday	7 JANUARY 2017	Synaxis of St John the Forerunner and Baptist 7.00-9.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

Fr Ephraim and Fr Athanasios, The Church Committee, the Ladies' Philoptohos Group,
the Sunday School Teachers and Christian Youth Group of our Church

Wish all the community

A JOYOUS, HOLY CHRISTMAS

AND BLESSED NEW YEAR 2017.

Homily on the Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour of Christ

On this holy day we call into the present those glorious, awesome and life-saving events that surround the miraculous birth of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the day on which God has fashioned all things anew. This is the day on which the whole universe is filled with light and all creation with joy. "The expectation of the nations has come" (Matins of the Feast).

"Today, He who holds the whole creation in His hand is born of the Virgin." (Royal Hours) The God whom the universe cannot contain has become incarnate for our sake. On this day, we sing with the angels in heaven. On this day, we rejoice with the shepherds. On this day, we worship with the wise men. On this day, those in heaven and those on earth join in chorus. In Vigil we sang, "today, heaven and earth are united." On this day, all creation rejoices—those in heaven and on earth, at the Mystery now revealed for our salvation: Christ God is born of the Virgin!

"Today, God has come to earth and man ascends to heaven" (Litya of the Feast). Or as 4th century Saint Athanasius declares, "Christ God became man that we may become gods" (On the Incarnation). God has destined us for glory, for Saint-hood, for communion with Him for eternity. We are called to be co-heirs with Christ, the Father's adopted sons. Christ's incarnation fills all of humanity with this potential: to find healing from sin-sickness, to conquer sin and death, to be made new, in the likeness of Christ, the new Adam. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive," declares St. Paul (I Cor. 15:22).

The One who created all things is now one of His own creations. "He who defines all things and is limited by none is contained in a small, makeshift manger. He who holds the universe and grasps it in the hollow of His hand, is wrapped in narrow, swaddling bands and fastened into ordinary clothes" (*Homily Fifty-Eight, "On the Saving Nativity of Christ"*).

He who is the King of Kings is worshiped by the Persian kings and receives their gifts in the stable. The Only-Begotten One, eternally begotten and not made, has become incarnate for our sake and reversed and renewed that human nature fallen into sin, despair, and death. "The Word has become flesh without leaving His Father" (Aposticha of the Feast). The one who anoints is now the anointed. The one who offers is now the one who is offered. Frankincense is prophetically among the gifts offered in homage by the Magi in preparation for Christ's life-saving death and burial whereby He defeats sin and death on our behalf.

The One who could, by His own words, call down a thousand angels to destroy the wicked, instead now submits Himself in His love and humility to the vulnerability of a new-born babe and the spitting, scourging, mocking, and crucifixion to follow, in order to save mankind.

The One who loved us into being, as a father loves his children he has begotten, now accepts love from his Virgin Mother and adopted father.

The uncircumscribable God has become circumscribed in His humanity while simultaneously remaining God. And so, for us, humility has a face; humility becomes known. The Wisdom and Word of God has enlightened the whole universe by virtue of His incarnation. Humility becomes the means of our renewal, in imitation of our Savior born this day in a manger, in a cave, among dumb beasts.

The conceit of the Devil has been undone, the curse has been made void. Eve is set free by the Virgin's faithfulness. The serpent is cast down. Through Eve, woman became the tool of sin... but through Mary, she becomes the first-fruit of salvation for all the world, for God, the All-Perfect, is born of her. By His birth He seals her virginity" (Aposticha of the Feast).

"He who rained manna on His people in the wilderness is fed on milk from His Mother's breast" (Royal Hours). He whose throne the six-winged Seraphim surround in worship, whose face they cannot bear to see, appears to us in human flesh as a new-born babe and the angels themselves are filled with fear and tremble. Because of this life-saving day, every human eye may now gaze on that face even as we see Him now through the holy icons, proclaiming the reality of His incarnation in the flesh.

This is our God! See His unsurpassed love for us. The great wall that divided man from God through sin and disobedience has been destroyed by the babe Jesus in the womb (adapted from Vespers of the Feast). See His humility: the uncontainable God has willed to be contained in the Virgin's womb for my sake, for your sake, for that of the whole world, for all who will believe in Him. He has become incarnate to fulfill His saving plan, to rescue us from ourselves, to give us true peace on earth—peace which surpasses all comprehension—the fruit of life with God, communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit's indwelling and to the glory of God the Father.

At Vespers for the Feast we sing, "The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens, a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, a manger; and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother."

Now we ask the question of ourselves: What do we offer Christ this day?

Let us offer Christ clean minds and a pure heart through repentance. "Let us offer Him a life of virtue instead of Myrrh." (Royal Hours). Let us offer our faith and love as we celebrate His holy Nativity. Let us receive Him inside ourselves in the Eucharist as the cave did of old, preparing Him room. May our hearts prepare Him room as well! For as Christ God did not reject the cave for His birth, neither will He reject the room of our soul, though it not be a fitting place for the Lord of Hosts. Yet, in love and humility, Christ comes to us, receives us, indwells us, heals us, feeds us, unites us further with Him and all those faithful who have come before us.

Thou, O Christ, has this day filled all things with joy! Together, joining our voices with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we proclaim this day: Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Fr. Robert Miclean