

Daily Orthodox - December 26th, 2024

Today is Thursday of the 27th Week after Pentecost — 2nd Day of the Feast of the Nativity.

Fasting Obligations

- **OCA, GOARCH, Antioch:** No fasting obligations.

Today, we commemorate...

1. The Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos

“On the second day of the Nativity, the Christian Church gives glory and thanksgiving to the Most-holy Theotokos, who gave birth to our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast is called "the Synaxis" because on this day all of the faithful gather to glorify her, the Most-holy Theotokos, and to solemnly and universally celebrate a feast in her honor. In Ohrid, it has been the tradition from ancient times that, on the eve of the second day of Nativity, Vespers has been celebrated only in the Church of the Most-holy Theotokos called the Chieftain [Čelnica]. All the clergy with the people gather together to glorify the Most-pure Mother of God.

2. The Commemoration of the Flight into Egypt

“The wise men (astrologers) from the East, having worshiped the Lord in Bethlehem, were directed to return to their home another way by command of an angel. Herod, that wicked king, planned to slaughter all the children in

Bethlehem, but God saw Herod's intention and sent His angel to Joseph. The angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream and commanded him to take the young Child and His Mother and flee to Egypt. Joseph did this. Taking the Divine Child and His Most-holy Mother, he traveled first to Nazareth (Luke 2:39), where he arranged his household matters, and then, taking his son James with them, went off to Egypt (Matthew 2:14). Thus the words of the prophet were fulfilled: *Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt* (Isaiah 19:1). In old Cairo today, the cave where the holy family lived can be seen. Likewise, in the village of Matarea near Cairo, the tree under which the Most-holy Theotokos rested with the Lord Jesus, as well as a miraculous spring of water under this tree, are visible. After having lived for several years in Egypt, the holy family returned to Palestine, again in response to a command of an angel of God. Thus another prophecy was fulfilled: *Out of Egypt have I called my Son* (Hosea 11:1). Herod was dead and his wicked son Archelaus—a worthy successor of him in evil—sat on his bloodstained throne. Hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Jerusalem, Joseph returned to Galilee, to his town of Nazareth, where he settled in his own home. Herod's second son, Herod the Younger, who was somewhat less evil than his brother Archelaus, then reigned in Galilee.

3. The Venerable Evarestus, monk of the Studion Monastery (825)

“ Reading the works of St. Ephraim the Syrian, Evarestus left the diplomatic service and became a monk. He was very strict with himself: he wore chains over his body and ate dry bread only once a week. He lived for seventy-five years and took up his habitation with the Lord in about the year 825.

4. Saint Euthymius the Confessor, Bishop of Sardis

“ Euthymius attended the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 783 and spent about thirty years in exile for his veneration of icons. During the reign of Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast, he was flogged with bullwhips, at which time he died a martyr's death, in the year 840, and received a wreath of glory in heaven.

5. The Venerable Constantine of Synnada (7th c.)

“ Constantine was a Jew who converted to Christianity. During his baptism he touched a Cross to his head, and a miraculous imprint of the Cross remained on

his head until his death. He died in Constantinople in the seventh century. Famous for his asceticism and many miracles, he prophesied the day of his death seven years beforehand.

6. *St. Archelaus*, bishop of Haran in northern Mesopotamia (ca. 280)
7. *St. Zeno*, bishop of Maiuma in Palestine (4th c.)
8. *St. Jarlath*, first bishop of Tuam, founder of the monastery of Cluain Fois (Ireland) (ca. 540)
9. *St. Nicodemus of Tismana*, Romania (1406)
10. *New Hieromartyr Constantius the Russian*, priest, of Constantinople (1743)
11. *New Hieromartyrs Leonid*, bishop of Mariisk, *Isaac II*, archimandrite, of Optina Monastery, *Basil*, hieromonk, and *New Martyr Augusta*, schemanun (1937)

For more information on today's saints or commemorations not provided, see

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives> (Slavic) and/or <https://www.goarch.org/chapel> (Greek).

Reflection

Reflections are added when it includes additional stories from the life of a saint commemorated today.

“ A story of the Divine Christ-child: When the holy family fled before Herod's sword to Egypt, robbers leapt out on the road with the intention of stealing something. The righteous Joseph was leading the donkey, on which were some belongings and on which the Most-holy Theotokos was riding with her Son at her breast. The robbers seized the donkey to lead it away. At that moment, one of the robbers approached the Mother of God to see what she was holding next to her breast. The robber, seeing the Christ-child, was astonished at His unusual beauty and said in his astonishment: "If God were to take upon Himself the flesh of man, He would not be more beautiful than this Child!" This robber then ordered his companions to take nothing from these travelers. Filled with gratitude toward this generous robber, the Most-holy Virgin said to him: "Know that this Child will repay you with a good reward because you protected Him today." Thirty-three years later, this same thief hung on the Cross for his crimes, crucified on the right side of Christ's Cross. His name was Dismas, and the name of the thief on the left side was Gestas. Beholding Christ the Lord innocently crucified, Dismas defended him, saying: *This man hath done nothing amiss* (Luke 23:41). Dismas, therefore, was the wise thief to whom our Lord said: *Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise* (Luke 23:43). Thus the Lord granted Paradise to him who spared Him in childhood.

Daily Scriptures

Slavic and Greek

- **Epistle:** Hebrews 2:11-18

“ <11> For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <12> saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." <13> And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." <14> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <15> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. <16> For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. <17> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <18> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

- **Gospel:** Matthew 2:13-23

“ <13> Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." <14> When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, <15> and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." <16> Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. <17> Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: <18> "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." <19> Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, <20> saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." <21> Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. <22> But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid

to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. <23> And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

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