

### *Saturday after the Nativity of Christ*

**Epistle:** 1 Timothy 4:12-16; sel. 288. **Gospel:** Matthew 12:15-21; sel. 46. See below, About the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ.

### *Sunday after the Nativity of Christ*

On this Sunday is commemorated the **righteous Joseph, the Betrothed of the Most Holy Virgin Theotokos, David the King, and James, brother of God.** The Holy righteous elder came from the royal line of David (Mt. 1:6; Lk. 1:27). The holy Evangelist calls him "righteous" (Mt. 1:18), and this name, according to the remarks St. John Chrysostom, demonstrates that the betrothed of the Most Holy Virgin "had all virtues". He lived in Nazareth and earned his living by working with his hands, being a woodworker, i.e. carpenter. As the man was strictly god-fearing, quite honorable, quiet, meek, humble, modest, sincere, peace loving, attentive to the voice of his conscience and to the announcements from above, Joseph was quite worthy of the great honor of living as the nearest spectator of the fulfillment of the "great mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16). He was already an eighty year old man and, according to the witness of St. Epiphanius, already "lived many years as a widower", when he was taken by his selection of the Providence of God to be the protector of the virginity of the Most Holy Virgin Mary (see Nov. 22). In the opinion of some, St. Joseph died soon after his visit to Jerusalem with the twelve-year-old Jesus Christ (Luke 2:41-52), as he is not mentioned in the Gospels after that. The Holy King David came from simple stock, and was the youngest son of Jesse, from the root of Judah, and was engaged in shepherding sheep, but he was distinguished by a rare mind, great courage, unshakable patience, great meekness, with a touching tenderness of heart, strict godliness, had a deep faith in God and truly loved Him, living with the constant feeling of the co-presence of the unseen God and complete dependence on His leadership, and he was "a man according to the heart of God" (Acts 13:22), and that is why he was selected by God to the kingdom in Israel. He reigned a thousand years before the Nativity of the Savior and was the second king of the Israelites. Before his reign, when he was still a young man, he, when the strong nation of the Philistines warred against the Israelites, left, with his firm trust in the help of God, for a one on one struggle with Goliath and with a single hit with a stone struck down the Philistine giant. Glorified for this by his compatriots, the young David with unshakable patience, meekness, and magnanimity had endured various attacks and evil intentions of Saul.

Having become the king of the Israelites, David conducted various wars with the neighboring peoples, conquered them, and in his reign has extended the limits of the kingdom to a rather significant degree. He made Jerusalem the capitol of the state. He transferred the ark of testimony there and resolutely was going to construct a permanent magnificent temple to the Lord to house the ark; but rather the will of God was declared to him, that he would not construct the temple, but that it would be his son (Solomon), that David only prepared all that was necessary for the building of the temple and entrusted to his son his intention and desire to carry out its fulfillment. He did many things for the glory of God and for the piety of the people. He led the divine services in the tabernacle in distinct order: he determined the number and order of the servers, he started a choir with many members of singers and he himself inspired by the Spirit of God composed many "psalms", or hymns for use in the Divine Services. For his piety and righteousness he earned such love and mercy from God that God confirmed to him all the promise given to Abraham. He promised him the sureness of his throne, the blessing and multiplication of his posterity and announced to him that from his posterity will be born the Deliverer of the world (Psalm 71:17; 88:29,36; Mt. 1:1, 20:31, 21:9; Lk. 1:32,33). Although, the deeply edifying life of King David was also darkened, due to the frailty of human nature, it was a heavy downfall (2 Kings 11), but also in this downfall he taught us the greatest example of repentant contrition and firm faith in God (see Psalm 50), which gave him the opportunity and power to throw off from himself the burden of sinfulness and raise himself up for a new spiritual life. The living and indestructible faith in God was the distinctive trait of King David. This faith gave him the opportunity to forcefully deflect all of Saul's animosity against him, to sustain the shock of various kinds of misfortunes of his multitested life, to deeply repent the union with sin, to humbly turn himself over to the watchful hand of God, to patiently endure all the punishments for this sin, to rise up higher after his downfall, rather than to where he was, and exhibit in himself a high example of penance, meekness, patience, hope and piety. And "the Lord took away David's sins, and exalted his horn forever, and He gave him a royal covenant, and a throne of glory in Israel" (Sir. 47:11). Being the greatest king of the Israelites, a fearless leader, a skilful governor, a high guide and a holy man, St. David was at the same time, an inimitable poet and inspired prophet. He was the originator of psalm singing, and his psalms, in which he with inspiration poured out feelings of faith and hope in God, gratitude and doxology, joy and grief, exaltation and repentant contrition, with the power and tenderness of expressions, with the highest and burning religious feeling, nothing like it exists in the books of

the Old Testament. The Book of Psalms of Holy King David serves as an inexhaustible treasury of the best examples of prayers, supplications, petitions, thanksgiving to God, the healing consolations for suffering souls, for those living in poverty, for those consumed with passions, and for the down-trodden. As a God-inspired prophet (Acts 2:30), the Holy King David in his psalms proclaimed many clear and strong prophecies about Jesus Christ (see Psalms 2:2; 40:10; 21:1, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18, 22; 62:22; 87:15, 10) <sup>1</sup>).

See October 23 for St. James.

On the present Sunday after the Nativity of Christ the Holy Church commemorates St. Joseph the Betrothed and the protector of the virginity of the Most Holy Theotokos, and together with him is also commemorated his flight with the All-holy Virgin and newborn Child Jesus into Egypt (Mt. 2:13). The Holy King and Prophet David is commemorated on the present day as the ancestor of ancestors of the Lord Jesus in the flesh, and St. James, the brother of the Lord, because according to tradition he took part in travel with the holy family to Egypt.

*Troparion, tone 2*

**O Joseph, proclaim to David,  
Ancestor of God, the wonders:  
You have seen the Virgin with child,  
You have glorified with the shepherds,  
And you have worshipped with the Magi,  
And an angel appeared to you:  
Pray to Christ God to save our souls.**

*Kontakion, tone 3*

**Today David is filled with divine gladness,  
Joseph and James offer praise.  
For they rejoice in the crown of relationship with Christ,  
And they hymn the One who is unspeakably born on earth and cry out:  
O Merciful One, save those who honor Thee.**

**Epistle:** Gal. 1:11-19; sel. 200. **Gospel:** Matthew 2:13-23, sel. 4.

**If the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ falls between December 26 and December 31, its services are served on these days. If it falls on January 1 then it is served on December 26.**

*Concerning the reading of the Epistles and Gospels on the Saturdays and Sundays after the Nativity of Christ and before Theophany*

If the Nativity of Christ falls on a Sunday, then there is between it and Theophany one Saturday (Dec. 31) and one Sunday (Jan. 1). Then the service for the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ is served on Monday December 26, on which day the Epistle and the Gospel for the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ are also read in the liturgy. And on Saturday December 31, on the Leavetaking of the feast, two Epistles and Gospels are read, first the one for the Saturday after the Nativity of Christ, and then the one for the Saturday before Theophany.

If the Nativity of Christ falls on Monday, which is between the Nativity of Christ and Theophany there also is one Saturday (Dec. 30) and one Sunday (Dec. 31). Then on December 30 first the Epistle and the Gospel for the Saturday after the Nativity of Christ and then the readings for the Saturday before Theophany are read, and on December 31 first the readings for the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ and then the readings for the Leavetaking of the feast are read, and the readings for the Sunday before Theophany are read on Monday January 1 (see Jan. 1).

If the Nativity of Christ falls on Tuesday, then before Theophany are two Saturdays (Dec. 29 and Jan. 5) and one Sunday (Dec. 30). Then the Saturday after the Nativity of Christ falls on December 29, on which day first the Epistle and Gospel for the Saturday after the Nativity of Christ and then the readings for the children killed for Christ's sake by Herod are read. The service for the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ is sung on December 30, as specified in the Rubrics. But the service for the Sunday before Theophany will be sung on January 1 (see Jan. 1).

If the Nativity of Christ falls on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday there are two Saturdays before Theophany (December 28 and January 4, December 27 and January 3, December 26 and January 2, respectively) and two Sundays (December 29 and January 5, December 28 and January 4, December 27 and January 3, respectively). Then on the first Saturday and Sunday the Epistle and Gospel for the Saturday and Sunday after the Nativity of Christ are read, and on the second Saturday and Sunday the Epistle and Gospel for the Saturday and Sunday before Theophany are read.

If the Nativity of Christ falls on a Saturday, then before Theophany there are two Sundays (December 26 and January 2) and one Saturday (January 1). Then the service for the Sunday after the

**Nativity of Christ is served on December 26, as specified in the Rubrics. On Friday December 31 the service for the Leavetaking of the feast is sung as specified in the Rubrics, except that the Prokeimenon, the Alleluia and the Communion Hymn is for the feast, but the Epistle and Gospel is for the Saturday after the Nativity of Christ. The Epistle and Gospel for the Saturday before Theophany are read on January 1 (see Jan. 1). For more details refer to the Chapter in the Typicon (Ustav): If the Nativity of Christ falls on a: 1) Sunday, 2) on Monday, 3) Tuesday, 4) Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. 5) Saturday.**

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Notes:

1) According to the teaching of St. Basil the Great: "the Book of Psalms is in itself the most useful of all books. It prophesies the future, it commemorates an event, it gives laws for living, and it lays down the rules for activity. In short, it is a general treasury of good teachings that one carefully finds to everyone's benefit. It heals even the chronic wounds of the soul, and the recently wounded submits to a speedy healing, and it raises the ill, and supports the uninjured; in general, in howsoever many ways possible, it subdues the passions that in human life under various conditions dominate the souls. And herewith it produces in man that quiet delight and satisfaction, which makes the mind chaste. The Holy Spirit knew that it is difficult to lead the human race to virtue, and that because of the propensity to pleasure we neglect the right way. And so what is one to do? The pleasantry of sweet singing is mixed in with the teachings, that together with the sweetness and the melodiousness to the ear, we received by an imperceptible image even that which is pleasing in the word. And wise physicians, who prescribe bitter medicine to drink to those who turn away from him in disgust, often smooth it over with a cup of honey. To this end this structured chanting of psalms are invented, so that even children and grown-ups, or in general those not brought up by the rules, or so it seems, only sang them, and actually trained their souls. Is it not then likely that the common people, usually careless, will go from here (that is, from the temple), comfortably keeping in their memory the apostolic and prophetic commandment, and sing verses from the psalms even in their homes, and even exclaim them in the market place. And if he, who like the wild beasts becomes furious with anger, will soon become pleasant upon hearing the psalms, his anger goes away, immediately taming the ferocity in his soul with sweet singing. The psalm is the quietness in souls, the dispenser of peace; it pacifies rebellious and agitated thoughts; it softens the irritability of the soul and makes intemperance be wise. The psalm is the mediator of

friendship, the solidarity among the distant, the reconciliation of combatants. For who can still count as an enemy one who uplifts with one voice to God? Therefore psalm singing delivers to us one of the greatest good that is love, discovering singing together instead of knots for unification, reducing the people to one harmonious choir. The psalm is a refuge from demons, the accession under the protection of Angels, a weapon against nightly terrors, rest from daily work, safety for children, the adornment of blossoming age, the consolation of old age, the most appropriate apparel for women. The psalm inhabits deserts, makes the market places fully wise. For the new ones walking in the way it is the beginning of learning, for the successful it is the increase of leadership, for the perfected it is the affirmation; it is the voice of the Church. It makes feasts bright; it brings forth sorrow as if from God. For the psalm even compels tears from a heart of stone. The psalm is the preoccupation of Angels, the heavenly cohabitation, and the spiritual incense. It is the wise invention of the Teacher, who constructed it in order that we sing and together study what is useful. From this even the lessons are better imprinted on our souls. For what is studied with compulsion does not remain in us for a long time; but that with pleasure and pleasantness is accepted and takes root more firmly in our souls. What will you learn from the psalms? Will you not know from here great courage, strict justice, honest chastity, perfection of good sense, image of repentance, a measure of patience, and anything good, what would you call that? Here is the perfect theology, prediction of the coming Christ in the flesh, the threat of the judgment, the hope of resurrection, the fear of punishment, the promise of glory, the revelation of mysteries. Everything is gathered in the Book of Psalms as if it were in a great and common treasury.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp., (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0480-0483  
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