



“ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:



St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU

Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE

St. John the Baptist - HOREN

Holy Ascension - CALMAR

St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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Volume 81, Issue 1

January 2026



Dear parishioners and friends of Orthodox IX Parishes!

By the mercy of God, we have once again been granted to enter the joy of the most glorious Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and once again to hear the all-joyful and familiar greeting: **“Christ is born – glorify Him!”** Which, according to our tradition, we transform so as all the joy of our life is now contained within it: **“Christ is born!”** – the clergy and our neighbors greet us; **“Let us glorify Him!”** – we respond, joyfully welcoming and blessing this long-awaited and mysterious event.

With joy that Christ has come into this world and believed in us before we believed in Him; loved us before we responded to His love.

With joy of the beginning of a new era in the life of humanity, opening for every believer the possibility of spiritual renewal and rebirth, **“for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people”** (Tit. 2:11).

With joy that Christ the Savior is born today in Bethlehem *“to raise up the image that had fallen,”* as one of the hymns of the Feast proclaims; He is born to restore to us the lost image of God, the lost Paradise, and the lost right to call God our Father.

Today we also hear the familiar angelic words: **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men”** (Luke 2:14). Yet this good will *is* Christ Himself, born this day on a cold night in a poor cave, outside human warmth and comfort, laid in a manger for the feeding of cattle.

It is He who, in the Garden of Gethsemane, will say: **“Not My will, but Yours be done,”** and will be the first among those who fulfilled the will of God – that **all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,** that is, the Kingdom of Heaven.

And we, like those ancient shepherds and Magi who hastened to the Savior’s manger, stand today at the spiritual cave, and not with our physical eyes, but with our very hearts, behold Emmanuel, who has brought to the whole world an utterly new message of Love – the good news – that **“God is with us”** (Matthew 1:23) – that has run like a scarlet thread through the whole history of mankind, and today has once again reached us. Amen!

Christ is Born! Let us glorify Him!

May we have a Blessed Nativity of Christ and a peaceful New 2026 Year!

Why Is Theophany Important?

By Archpriest Michael Gillis

The feast of Theophany (also called Epiphany) is the second greatest feast (after Pascha) in the Christian Calendar [January 19]. Theophany is even more important than Nativity. In fact, Theophany is the fulfillment of the Nativity. At Christ's birth, his revelation as the God-man begins. However, this revelation begins slowly, quietly (it had actually begun silently nine months earlier at the Annunciation).

At Christ's birth, only a few shepherds know what is going on – and an angel had to reveal it to them: “Go into the town” the angel told the shepherds, “and look for a tightly-wrapped baby lying in a feeding trough [or in a manger].” While Jesus was still an infant but after Joseph and Mary had settled in a house, three Wise Men from the



East found them; but no one else did. And then the Holy Family left town and lived in Egypt for many years. The manifestation or coming (literally, the “epiphany”) of the Son of God as the Son of Man did not become fully revealed until thirty years later at the baptism of Christ by His cousin John in the Jordan River.

At His baptism, Christ not only fully identifies with our fallen humanity, but he even takes on our repentance. As St. Paul says, “He who knew no sin, became sin for us...” (2 Cor. 5: 21). **Although Christ had no sin to repent of, He received the baptism of repentance on behalf of all human beings.** So much did Christ identify with humanity, all humanity, that he took on the consequences of sin – himself being completely free from sin – for the sake of all men and women. In Christ everything is fulfilled on behalf of every human being: “all righteousness” is fulfilled, He says to John before His baptism (Matt. 3:15).

At His baptism, Christ not only identifies with our humanity, but He also reveals His divinity. And more than that, **for the first time in all the Scriptures, in all of history, the Holy Trinity is clearly revealed:** The voice of the Father speaks of the Beloved and Well Pleasing Son while the Spirit descends in the form of a dove. Never before had the mystery of the One God in Three Persons been revealed so clearly. **Here at Christ's baptism the mystery that began to be revealed at his birth is openly manifest to the universe and before the crowds who had come to be baptized by John: the Son of God is the Son of Man.**

At His baptism, Christ not only identifies completely with our humanity, but He also begins the transformation of the entire created world. **Instead of the water of the Jordan washing away His sin – for He had no sin – the brilliancy of Christ's divinity and the power of His sinless Humanity began the reversal of the ancient curse.** The demonic forces that hid in the water (which in the Old Testament refer to death) and which manipulated the natural world to terrorize lost humanity, these demonic forces were crushed when Christ entered the water of baptism. No longer would the deep, the abyss, or Sheol hold power over mankind: having been baptized in the water, Christ would walk on the water, Christ would pull the sinking Peter from the water: even the watery depths could no longer control mankind, that is mankind in Christ. At Christ's baptism the ancestral curse begins to reverse.

And after His baptism, having as a man been filled with the Holy Spirit, Christ begins to show the way to triumph over temptation, sin, sickness, religious hypocrisy, political oppression, demonic oppression and eventually even death itself. Christ as a man—without ceasing to be God, but laying aside his prerogatives as God – Christ as a man conquers all human enemies. Christ as a man shows the way for all mankind into the Kingdom of God, into Paradise, into the Resurrection and into Eternal Life.

This is why Theophany is so important. In remembering, in celebrating the baptism of Christ, we call to mind in the most profound way the revelation of the God-man, the washing away of sin through repentance, the reverse of the ancient curse, and the conquering of sin and all of its consequences, even death. The world was enlightened at Christ's baptism, and when we prayerfully remember it, we come to experience that enlightenment just a little more fully.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NATIVITY

Deeper insight into the events of the Nativity



The events leading up to and which happened at the cave of Bethlehem at midnight on Christmas are the 'heart' of the Nativity events. The other Biblical events read one after another at Christmas actually happened over a longer time frame (i.e. the Presentation was eight days later [commemorated on February 15], the arrival of the Magi is placed anywhere from 10 days later (January 19/Epiphany) up to two years, the slaughter of the Holy

Innocents shortly after Epiphany or up to two years later followed by the Flight to Egypt). Using commentary is from the Orthodox Study Bible we examine what happened at the first Nativity.

Luke 2:1 *And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.*

⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. ⁶So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Commentary: God uses earthly rulers to accomplish His will. This census enabled Christ to be born in Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah (Mic 5:1). In the hymn by St. Cassiane sung at Vespers of the Lord's Nativity, Augustus ruling as the only emperor over many scattered cities is an icon of our one Lord gathering the scattered pagans of the world. Christ being registered in the fallen world enables the faithful to be registered in the name of God.

Matthew 1:18 *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰But while he*

thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.



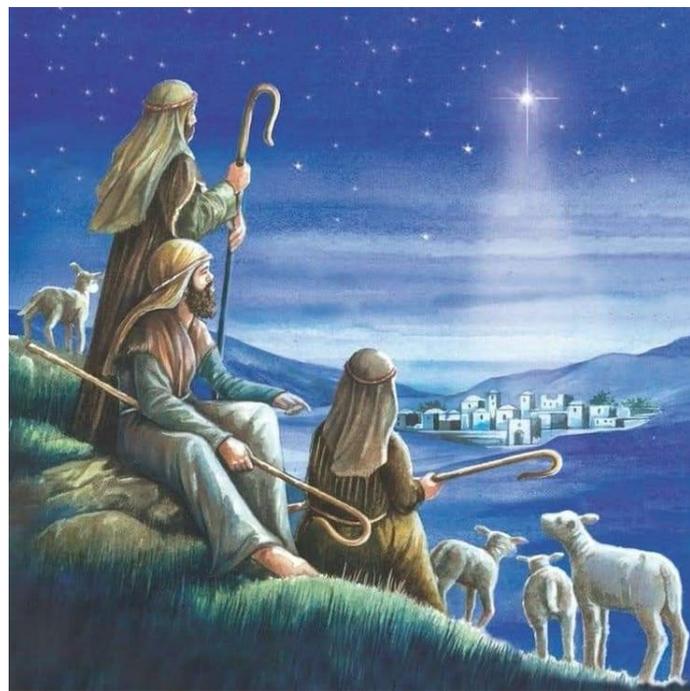
Commentary: The righteousness of Joseph consisted of a mercy that transcends the Law (Hos 6:6). Joseph showed this mercy by his unwillingness to expose Mary’s supposed sin, even though he was obliged by the Law to do so. Her husband: The Bible calls engaged couples husband and wife before their marriage (Rachel was called the wife of Jacob before marriage by virtue of their engagement in Gn 29:21; see also Dt 22:23, 24). Thus, Joseph is called the husband of Mary, and Mary is called his wife (vv. 20, 24). In the Church, Joseph is remembered as the Betrothed, pointing out Mary’s ever-virginity. An angel (or “messenger”) of the Lord dispels Joseph’s false reasoning by announcing the utterly unreasonable:

The conception of Jesus fulfills Isaiah 7:14, where we are told that a virgin would conceive and bear a Son. He who is conceived in Mary is not a new Person coming into existence but the eternal Son of God now using her womb as His throne. Both the virginal conception by means of the Holy Spirit and the name Immanuel, God with us, declare Christ’s divinity. The use of the word ‘till’ does not imply that Joseph had marital relations with Mary after the Savior’s birth. In the Bible, this word (sometimes translated ‘to’) is often used to express a situation that actually continues after the event mentioned (see 28:20; Gn 8:7; Dt 34:6; 2Kg 6:23). The witness of the entire Church throughout history is that Mary remained a virgin for life.

Luke 2:8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ

the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” 15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Commentary: The term firstborn does not imply Mary had additional children, but only that no child was born before Jesus. The firstborn son is traditionally the primary heir and recipient of blessings. Christ is the firstborn over all creation, and thus the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:15, 18). In Orthodox icons of the Nativity, Christ’s swaddling cloths are depicted as burial wrappings, affirming that one purpose of His coming was to endure death. The manger, or feed trough, would have been in a cave where animals were



kept, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: “The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib” (Is 1:3).

Shepherds are chosen to hear the first announcement of the Nativity, as they are symbols of Christ the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11). Unlike the Pharisees, the shepherds were without guile and had simple faith.

The message of the first angel is confirmed by the multitude, fulfilling the Law in which every word is established with two or three witnesses (Dt 19:15).

Christ Himself is our peace who has come to earth; in Him, man is no longer estranged from God (see Eph 2:14–16). The shepherds are also images of the bishops

and presbyters of the Church, who proclaim Christ to the world. St. Ambrose writes that Mary’s own faith was strengthened by the news from the shepherds, and he asks, “If Mary herself learns from the shepherds, why do so many refuse to learn from the presbyters of the Church?”

Christ is born! – Glorify Him!

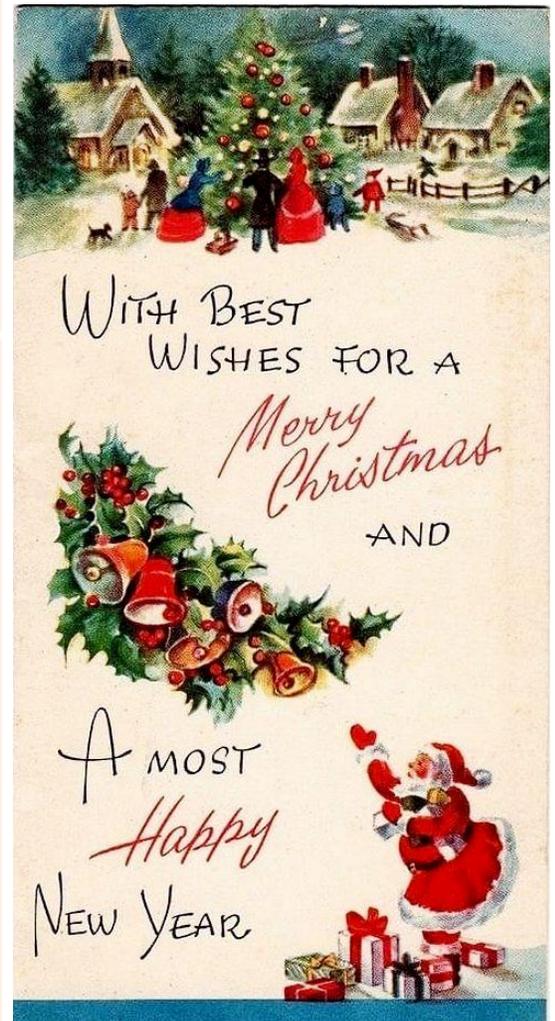
Thank you from and to the Orthodox IX Christian Community!

As we enter this new 2026 year, let us make all our hopes of it complete by acknowledging and venerating Christmas – the Nativity of Jesus Christ, our God. Because today the Eternal Word humbly enters this world and this time, bringing light to those in darkness, and peace and hope to all mankind! Into the Christmas grace let us wrap our best feelings of the warmest gratitude to each other, for keeping this bright candle burning and sharing its warmth all through the year of 2026!

- 🔔 To the priesthood of the Patriarchal Parishes and our sister Churches, for guidance and co-serving, for their care for the people and their salvation, and for fostering the glorification of the Holy Trinity!
- 🔔 To the parishioners of Orthodox IX, St. Barbara Cathedral, Orthodox V, and our sister Churches for the participation, contributions, and love for the Liturgical life and the living faith that unites and enlightens us!
- 🔔 To the constant and devout members of our Church Boards (Parish Councils). A heartfelt thank you for your tireless efforts in organizing and leading the life of the Church, tending to all the sacred spaces entrusted to you, and creating spaces of welcome, joy, and God's grace!
- 🔔 To all who have sacrificially offered themselves by sharing their time, resources, and skills to uphold and keep our Parishes this past year: also, for your generosity in granting funds, supplies, voluntary work, and, certainly, your time and prayer!

May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, grant you the incorruptible treasures of His Grace and keep you in good health and furtherance in all things!

As we begin this new chapter, let us continue in unity and devotion, lifting each other up in prayer and love, for the salvation of our souls and the glory of God the Father!



The Dates and Holy Events to remember in the first half of the year of 2026

- **February 23. Monday – GREAT LENT BEGINS**
- **March 1. – Sunday of Orthodoxy**
- **March 7. Saturday – 10:00 am – The Annual “Orthodox IX” Parishes meeting will be held at St. Mary Parish Hall, Nisku.**
- **March 28. Saturday – 1:00 pm – The Annual St. Mary’s Parish meeting will be held at Parish Hall, Nisku.**
- **April 4 – Lazarus Saturday**
- **April 5 – Palm Sunday**
- **April 7. Tuesday – Annunciation of the Mother of God**
- **April 9, 10, 11 – Great Thursday, Friday and Saturday**
- **April 12 – Easter Sunday – HOLY PASCHA – THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST**

The Echoes of Christmas

From *Christmas Stories*

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

by Robert Lewis Stevenson



Loving Father, help us to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world.

Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from the evil by the blessing which Christ brings and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be Thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen!

A LETTER TO SANTA

By the unknown author

Dear Santa:

As I have been shopping and planning my gifts for others this Christmas season, I have been thinking of the gifts I would like for myself. Please, dear Santa, bring me:

Patience, and an understanding heart, and the wisdom to guide my children to happy, useful adulthood.

A knowledge of the things needful for my spouse's happiness and health so that I may be a good helpmate as well as an understanding parent.

Give me thoughtfulness that I may share my abundant joy with my own parents and do what I can for them in return for all they have given me.

I wish, too, a joyous spirit which would meet each trial with a smile and add to the happiness of my friends and neighbors.

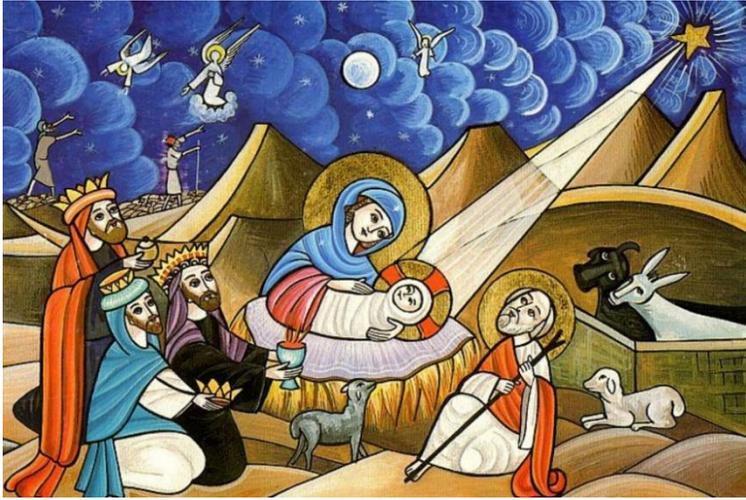
Give me a critical attitude toward my own faults and a tolerant one toward the faults of others.

And lastly, give me such a sense of fellowship with all people on earth that I cannot be truly happy until I have done my utmost to bring joy and relieve sorrow and suffering for others wherever they may be.

Gratefully yours.

P.S. If I have asked for too much, just give me a living, loving faith in the teachings of Him whose birthday we are celebrating this Christmas.





*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;
the stars in the heavens looked down where He lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

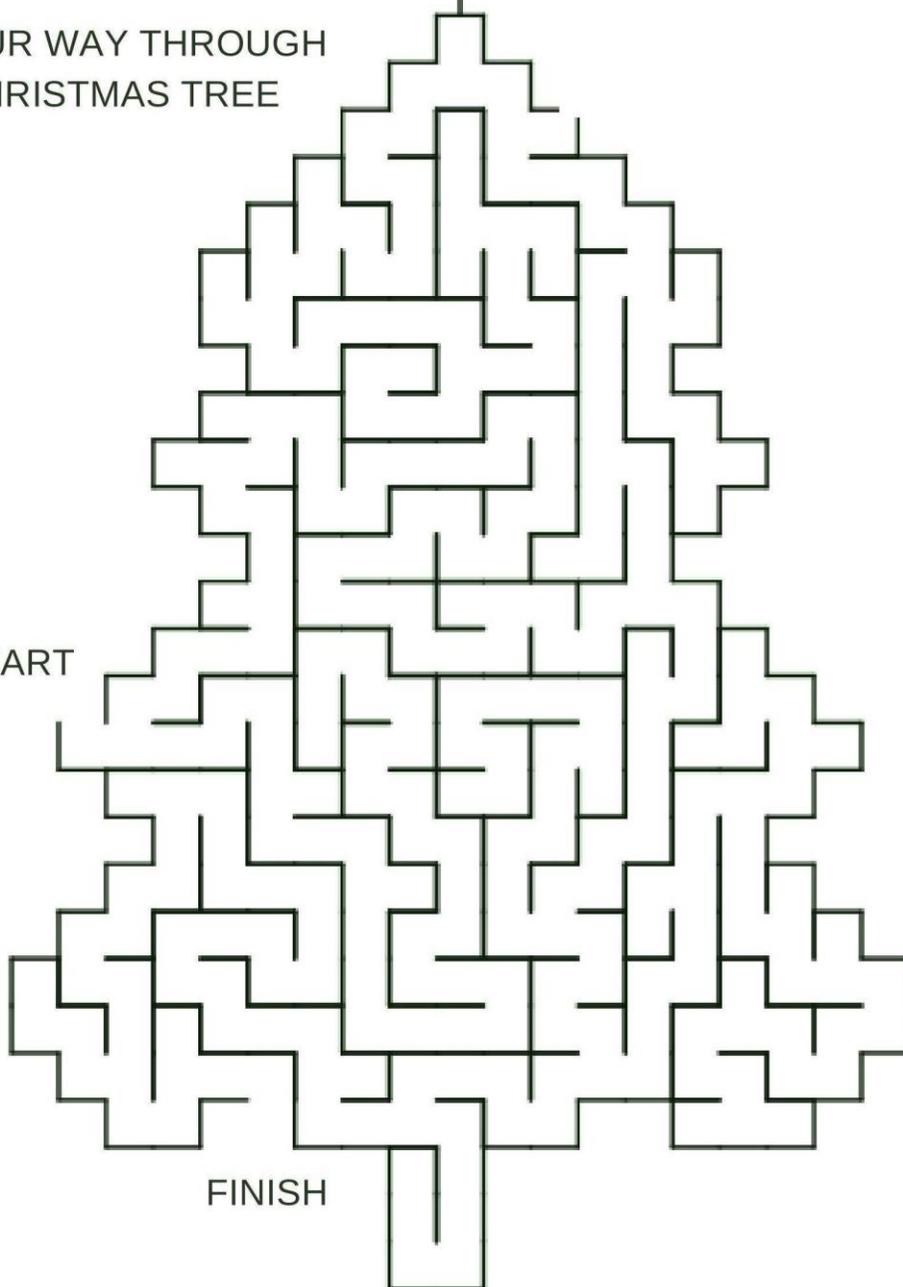
*The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.*

Christmas Tree Maze

FIND YOUR WAY THROUGH
THE CHRISTMAS TREE

START

FINISH





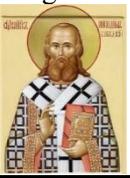
NATIVITY I-SPY



COUNT HOW MANY YOU CAN FIND THEN
WRITE THE NUMBER IN THE BOX



January 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				<u>1</u> <i>Civic New Year</i> 	<u>2</u> Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ	<u>3</u> Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ
<u>4</u> 10:00 am - Liturgy at St. Barbara Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ	<u>5</u> Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ	<u>6</u> Christmas Eve 2:00 p.m. – Christmas Vespers & Matins - Nisku	<u>7</u>  Nativity of Christ 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy	<u>8</u> Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos Sviatki Fast-free – to (including) January 17	<u>9</u> Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen (ca. 34) 	<u>10</u> New Hieromartyrs Nikodim, of Belgorod 
<u>11</u> Sunday after the Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, holy ancestors 14,000 Infants (Holy Innocents) 10:00 am - Liturgy at St. Barbara	<u>12</u> Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ Virginmartyr Anysia at Thessalonica 	<u>13</u> Apodosis of the Nativity St. Peter Mogila, metropolitan of Kiev 	<u>14</u> Circumcision of the Lord, St. Basil the Great, Julian New Year St. Basil the Great, (379) 10:00 am - Liturgy at St. Barbara	<u>15</u> Forefeast of the Theophany Venerable Sylvester of the Kiev Caves 	<u>16</u> Forefeast of the Theophany St. Genevieve of Paris (512) 	<u>17</u> Forefeast of the Theophany Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles 
<u>18</u> 10:00 am - Liturgy at St. Barbara Epiphany Eve (fast day) 	<u>19</u> The Baptism of our Lord Holy Theophany 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at Nisku with water & houses blessing!	<u>20</u> Synaxis of John the Baptist 	<u>21</u> Venerable Gregory, wonderworker of the Kiev Caves 	<u>22</u> Hieromartyr Philip, metropolitan of Moscow 	<u>23</u> St. Theophan the Recluse, bishop of Tambov 	<u>24</u> <i>Saturday after the Baptism of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ</i>
<u>25</u> <i>Sunday after the Baptism of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ</i> 10:00 am - Liturgy at St. Barbara	<u>26</u> Martyrs Hermylus and Stratonicus at Belgrade (315) 	<u>27</u> The Holy Fathers slain at Sinai and Raithu 	<u>28</u> St. Paul of Thebes, Egypt, and St. John Calabytes 	<u>29</u> Martyr Danax the Reader in Macedonia 	<u>30</u> Emperor St. Theodosius the Great (395) 	<u>31</u> Venerable Cyril and Maria (parents of St. Sergius of Rad.) 