

Magnificat

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Advent
2011

Theotokos

Even for those who hold her in no special veneration, the Virgin Mary looms large in the celebration of Christmas. It is, after all, virtually impossible to relate the events of a child's birth without reference to his mother. This is all the more so in the case of Jesus, due to the marvelous circumstances of His birth and because of the importance Christians assign to His coming among us: conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, Christ, our true God, has become Man for our salvation. The profound implications of the Incarnation impel our Christmas joy.

We who observe the ancient liturgical traditions of the Christian East are never far from this joy. We meditate on the Incarnation and its significance for our salvation throughout the year,

What shall we offer You, O Christ,
who for our sake came on earth as man?
Every creature made by You gives You thanks:
The angels offer Hymns of praise; the heavens a star;
the Magi present their gifts, the shepherds their wonder;
the earth provides a cave, the wilderness a manger;
and we, we offer You a mother, a virgin mother.
O God who are from all eternity,
have mercy on us.

From Great Vespers of Christmas

and hardly a Service goes by without some touch of Christmas wonder. Remembering that God took flesh entails remembrance of the woman from whom that flesh came. Thus, we remember Mary in some fashion at every Service for her central place in the economy of salvation; our veneration of the Virgin is intimately bound up with our understanding and worship of her Son.

The understanding came neither easily, nor without pain; the many and profound implications of the Incarnation were not quickly grasped. The shepherds who gazed in wonder and the Magi who bore gifts could have realized only dimly – if at all – that, in the serene face of the Babe at Bethlehem, they were seeing the face of God. Indeed, it was only after the Resurrection – and

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparch of Chicago, and belonging to the Ukrainian Metropolis in the United States of America, which is in union with the Pope of Rome, supreme pastor of the universal Church. We embrace Evangelical poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability of life, according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and the traditions of the Christian East. In our skete at Jacob's Falls, on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, we devote ourselves to a common life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.



under the guidance of the Holy Spirit – that the Disciples who had lived so closely with Jesus during His earthly ministry began to understand just who He really was. So too, through trial and controversy during the ensuing centuries, the Church’s understanding of this mystery, and of what it meant for the life and faith of believers, continued to grow.

The Christmas Gospels – the first two chapters of St. Matthew’s account and the first two of St. Luke’s – clearly establish Christ’s virgin birth and divine sonship. But it is the Evangelist known to Eastern Christians as the Theologian who plumbs the depths of meaning in the assertion that Jesus is the Son of God.

St. John, in the first verses of his Gospel (1:1-18), proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh: the only Son of God, through whom all things were made; who was with God in the beginning, and, in truth, was God; and who came into the world as the light of all men to reveal His Father to us. The remainder of the Gospel, in recounting His teaching, and in describing the signs marking His life, death, and Resurrection, elaborates this truth in numerous ways. Indeed, the Evangelist, himself, tells us (Jn. 20-31) that his purpose in writing was to share this understanding of Jesus with us, so that we, too, might have life through belief in Him.

Attempts at understanding and expressing this belief resulted in varying doctrinal formulations which often gave rise to rancorous disputes. The controversies centered for the most part on Jesus, reiterating again and again the question He had once put to His Disciples (Mt. 16:15): *But whom do you say that I am?* And each response,

through the working of the Holy Spirit, brought greater clarity to the Church’s life-giving belief in Jesus Christ and helped shape the faith we live today.

In formulating her responses to the various disputes, the Church acted as she had from Apostolic times (cf. Acts 15:1-30). Exercising the power to bind and loose (cf. Mt. 19:18) which had come to them from the Apostles by the laying on of hands, councils of bishops evaluated the various positions and judged whether they were consonant with the faith revealed in Scripture and handed on to them.

In 325 AD, a Council of more than 300 bishops convened at Nicaea to evaluate the teaching of Arius, a priest of Alexandria, who maintained that the Word who became flesh in Christ Jesus was not, in fact, God, but, rather, the first and greatest of His creations. The Council Fathers knew that this was not the Faith that had been handed on to them and for which so many had recently

Who does not bless you, all-holy Virgin?
 Who does not praise your divine birth-giving?
 For the only Son of God,
 eternally begotten of the Father,
 ineffably took flesh and came forth from you.
 He who is by nature God
 for our sake became also by nature man,
 one in person,
 but with two distinct and unconfused natures.
 O all-pure Lady, we implore you,
 beseech Him to have mercy on our souls.

From Great Vespers of Sunday
 Tone VI

suffered and died. The Creed they promulgated at this First Ecumenical Council declared Christ to be *the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. Light from Light, true God from True God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father.* In these same words, we proclaim our adherence to the ancient Faith of the Church concerning Jesus Christ at each Divine Liturgy.

With the Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council, gathered at Constantinople in 381, we also acknowledge the Holy Spirit as *Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.* This understanding of God as Trinity, inherent, but not elaborated, in the New Testament,

we proclaim daily, not only in the words of the Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed, but also in the constant invocation of God as *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* throughout our many Services. Likewise, the Acts of the Third Ecumenical Council inform our remembrance of the Blessed Virgin.

Early in the fifth century, Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, refused to accord the Virgin Mary the title *Theotokos*, or Mother of God, which had already enjoyed long use in popular devotion. Mary, he argued, was the mother of Christ's human nature, not His divinity; as such, she could, at most, be called the Mother of Christ. The Fathers gathered at Ephesus in 431 declared to the contrary: **The Word was made flesh** (Jn. 1:14). Mary gave birth, not to a nature, but to Jesus Christ, whose divine and human natures formed one Person. Mary had borne the Word of God made flesh; she was truly and fittingly to be called the Mother of God. To deny her this title is to diminish and impoverish our understanding of Jesus.

Mary plays an integral role in our piety and worship according to the Byzantine tradition. But she never stands alone. Our veneration of her flows exclusively from her relationship to her Son and from her instrumental role in His becoming Man. God is pure spirit, immortal, and incapable of suffering. Only by taking flesh could He suffer and die for us. Christ's flesh and His human nature are the instruments through which He worked our salvation, and these He received from His Virgin Mother; through her, then, Salvation, in the Person of Jesus Christ, has come into the world.

The seemingly extravagant language of our

poetic texts is a feeble attempt to express in human words the depth of the love God manifests toward us in Christ Jesus. Mary is the channel through which that love entered the world. In this she is, indeed, as we so often sing in our Services, *more honorable than the Cherubim, beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim*, and we find it truly fitting to sing her praise.

But the unity of divine and human in the Person of Christ has ramifications far beyond the titles of respect we might accord his mother. By sharing the poverty of our humanity He offers us a share in the riches of His divinity (cf. 2 Cor. 8-9). Through our union with Christ we share in His glory (cf. Jn. 17:22-23). We are truly to become

partakers of the divine nature (2 Pt. 1:4); we are destined to become by grace what God is by nature. Thus, St. Athanasius (died 373 AD) summed up the purpose of the Christmas Mystery in his treatise *On the Incarnation*: **God became Man that we might be made God.**

In His merciful love for us, God forever joins our nature with His. In Christ Jesus human nature is redeemed, raised to a higher level than it enjoyed before our fall into sin. Having been touched by

divinity, our fallen nature, indeed, all creation, is no longer the same; the old relationships and separations no longer apply. God enters and suffuses His universe; all creation becomes holy by His grace.

This, then, is the cause of our Christmas joy. May it penetrate deep into our hearts. This Christmas let us truly sing with the Angels:

**Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will toward men.**

Behold a new wonder
greater than all the wonders of old!
For who has known a mother
to bear a child without the help of man
and hold in her arms
Him who encompasses all creation?
It was God's will to be thus born,
and you, O all-pure Virgin,
carried Him as an infant in your arms.
Therefore, with the boldness of a mother,
Pray unceasingly for us who honor you,
and entreat Him to have mercy on us
and save our souls.

From Great Vespers of Sunday
Tone II

A Few Changes

The Services of the Byzantine tradition are precious gifts of immeasurable value that have been handed on to us. Neither duty to discharge nor task to perform, our worship is a grace in which we are privileged to participate. Forged through long centuries of Christian experience, the Services have about them an all-pervading sense of the Divine; they provide opportunity to join the faithful of ages past and share in the worship offered around the Throne of Heaven.

The Divine Liturgy and the various Services of the Divine Office have many elements in common, and the faithful participate in them with an easy familiarity. But, their celebration can be exhausting as well as exhilarating. Their complexity is proverbial and a bewildering array of service books sources their texts. It is not at all uncommon for the celebration of a single Service to require the use of three or four different books, and the ever-changing intersection of weekly, seasonal, and annual cycles brings about frequent variation.

Christmas normally begins with a celebration of the Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on the evening before, followed by a late night Vigil of Great Compline and Matins, and by the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in the morning. There are also major Services throughout the preceding day.

The four minor hours of the Divine Office – appointed for the first, third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day – are usually rather brief. Their three psalms, proper troparion and kontakion, and routine prayers are most often recited with little ceremony in the space of fifteen or twenty minutes. In anticipation of Christmas, however, they receive extended treatment.

The psalmody appointed for these Royal Hours (so called because of their customary attendance by the Byzantine Emperor) points to the coming of the Messiah and the definitive establishment of His Kingdom. In readings from the Old Testament, the Epistles, and the Gospels, we hear the events we celebrate predicted by

the Prophets, expounded by the Apostles, and proclaimed by the Evangelists, making explicit our conviction that the Babe born in Bethlehem is truly the long awaited Messiah. Profoundly theological poetic texts separate the readings and psalms and illuminate the Feast in the particular clarity of Byzantine light. Sermons in verse, they meditate on the Scriptural narrative and explore its ramifications, drawing us deeper into the mystery of our faith and keeping us mindful of the vastness we celebrate in the birth of this Child.

Each Royal Hour represents a complete celebration of Christmas in miniature, culminating in the proclamation of the Gospel. Taken in sequence, the Gospel readings present the full sweep of the Christmas narrative, and when the Services are celebrated together as one – the usual parish arrangement – the Royal Hours form a long and powerful Service of the Word for Christmas. In the more leisurely schedule of the monastery, they keep the daylight hours of Christmas Eve holy throughout their course.

This year, however, in a not infrequent variant of schedule, the Royal Hours of Christmas are actually celebrated a day early. Christmas Eve is considered a day of strict fast, but Saturday and Sunday, because of their respective remembrance of the Creation and the Resurrection, are never total fast days in the Byzantine tradition. Therefore, when Christmas falls on Sunday, as this year, or on Monday, as it did several years ago, the Royal Hours are celebrated on Friday in order to preserve their connection with a day of strict fasting. This year we are opting for the parochial manner of their celebration, and there are some differences in the other Services, as well. In the interest of clarity, we post a schedule on the following page.

Holy Scripture is the heart of our Christmas observance. We note the readings for the respective Services in the schedule. We hope you will have time to read and pray over them, joining us in spirit during this sacred period. Certainly, we will keep you very much in our hearts as we celebrate the Lord's coming among us as Man.

Services, Christmas 2011

Sunday, 18 December 2011 -- Sunday Before Christmas

5:30 pm (Saturday)	Great Vespers	1) Genesis 14:14-20; 2) Deuteronomy 1:8-11.15-17; 3) Deuteronomy 10:14-21
10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Hebrews 11:9-10.17-23.32-40; 2) Mt. 1:1-25

Friday, 23 December 2011 -- Prefestive Day of Christmas

10:00 am	The Royal Hours	1st: 1) Micah 5:2-4; 2) Hebrews 1:1-12; 3) Matthew 1:18-25 3rd: 1) Baruch 3:36-4:4; 2) Galatians 3:23-4:5; 3) Luke 2:1-20 6th: 1) Isaiah 7:10-16;8:1-4,8-10; 2) Hebrews 1:10- 2:3; 3) Matthew 2:1-12 9th: 1) Isaiah 9:6-7; 2) Hebrews 2:11-18; 3) Matthew 2:13-23
5:30 pm	Vespers of the Paramony	

Saturday, 24 December 2011 -- Vigil of Christmas. Saturday before Christmas

5:00 am	Matins and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Galatians 3:8-12; 2) Luke 13:18-29
5:30 pm	Great Vespers of Christmas	1) Genesis 1:1-13; 2) Numbers 24:2-3,5-9,17-18; 3) Micah 4:6-7,5:2-4; 4) Isaiah 11:1-10; 5) Baruch 3:35-4:4; 6) Daniel 2:31-36,44-45; 7) Isaiah 9:6-7; 8) Isaiah 7:10-16;8:1-4,9-10; 9) Galatians 3:15-22; 10) Matthew 13:31-36
10:00 pm	Great Compline and Solemn Matins	1) Matthew 1:18-25

Sunday, 25 December 2011 -- Christmas Day

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great	1) Galatians 4:4-7; 2) Matthew 2:1-12
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A Model of Generosity

While celebrating the great truths of our salvation, the Church does not forget the holy ones who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. One, whose commemoration falls within the Christmas season, has been a constant source of hope for this struggling monastery.

St. Melania the Younger was born to a Roman family of Senatorial rank in 383 AD. Her widowed grandmother, St. Melania the Elder, had fled the decadence of fourth century Rome and established a monastery at Jerusalem where she cared for the needs of pilgrims to the Holy Land. From a young age Melanie had wished to follow the example of her namesake, but, at the insistence of her father, who was concerned about preserving the family wealth intact, at age fourteen, she was married to her seventeen-year-old kinsman, Valerius Pinianus.

She quickly bore him two children, both of whom died shortly after birth. Melanie, herself, nearly died during the second delivery, and Pinian, in gratitude for her survival, acquiesced to her fervent desire to live henceforth in continence. Upon the death of her father, from whom she had inherited a fortune second only to that of the Imperial Family, she retired with Pinian and Albina, her mother, to a villa in the country which soon became a center of charity, hospitality, and religious life.

Melanie and Pinian now began to divest themselves of their great wealth, selling off their properties in the western provinces of the Empire, retaining only certain estates in Italy and North Africa for the funding of monasteries. They distributed the proceeds far and wide to the benefit of the poor, sick, captives, and pilgrims; they endowed churches and monasteries as far away as Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. In the space

of two years they gave freedom and a new start in life to more than two thousand slaves.

With the chaos of barbarian invasions descending on Italy early in the fifth century, they fled to North Africa where they founded two monasteries, one for men and another for women, at Tagaste in what is now Tunisia. They visited St. Augustine in Hippo, where – his reputation for holiness having already grown so great – the townspeople tried to make Pinian a priest. After seven years they moved on to Jerusalem, taking time on the way to visit many of the holy Fathers in the Egyptian desert.

After fourteen years together in the Holy City, Albina died, and Pinian soon followed. Melanie buried them side by side on the Mount of Olives and built a small cell for herself close by. Drawn by her asceticism and holiness, others came to join her there, and, expending the last of her once great fortune, she founded a monastery for consecrated virgins

on the very spot and one for a community of monks close by.

Worn out by austerity, fasting, and asceticism, St. Melania the Younger reposed in the Lord at fifty-six years of age on December 31, 439 AD. She is listed in the Roman Martyrology for that day, along with Pinian, her husband and spiritual brother; beyond this, the Western Church extends her no particular recognition. The Church of the Byzantine tradition, however, continues to remember her on the anniversary of her death.

Each day in our little monastery we add her Troparion and Kontakion to those prescribed for the day and season. Recalling her holiness and generosity, we lovingly trust in her intercession for our many needs.

Your soul shone with light
from the One born for us of the Virgin,
and you sparkled with all the virtues,
O you who are worthy of all praise.
On earth you shared your worldly wealth,
storing up for yourself treasures in heaven
and becoming a marvelous example
of ascetical life.

Wherefore, O holy Melanie,
we honor you with love.

Kontakion of St. Melania of Rome



Saint Melania the Younger of Rome

and the final week of business saw completion of the foundation and masonry work.

Carpentry began on October 31 and has progressed steadily these past several weeks. With the building now largely closed in against the weather – which, experience tells us, we can expect to turn nasty any time now – work can proceed uninterrupted throughout the winter on the interior insulation and finishes and on the mechanical systems which will make the building functional. God willing, all will be in place and operational by spring and the coming of **Jampot**'s twenty-sixth season.

Though not overly large – its footprint is only about two-thirds that of our woefully undersized kitchen – the new two-story structure represents a significant development in our ability to handle produce and offers the promise of continued growth in the future. Although its walk-in produce cooler will, perhaps, be underused at first, it will certainly assume a much larger role as our orchard increasingly provides us with fruit. Moreover, removal of refrigeration units currently in the kitchen to the new building will free up badly needed work space. Over time the new facility will prove as vital to **Jampot**'s operation as the walk-in freezer and warehouse built in 1996 and the generator installed in 2009.



We now begin to see the results of the past four years of struggle. Construction of the **Jampot** storage building first proposed in April of 2007 is at last underway.

Work began this spring with excavation of the hillside to the south of the existing structures. As intended, the digging and hauling was, for the most part, accomplished before the beginning of the season and the return of traffic. The resulting large hole made for good conversation with patrons through out the summer and fall. One remaining, particularly resistant spur of bedrock succumbed to the tender ministrations of a hydraulic hammer during the second week of October,



Four years may seem a long time to struggle for so modest an addition to our facilities, but the wait did allow for much thought as how to best make use of the permitted space. The building now under construction will prove more immediately useful and more contributive to future growth than what we had envisioned in 2007. Recognizing the value of the delay, we are none-the-less grateful for the circumstances and generosity that have made construction possible at this time.

We pray the other delays and seeming frustrations we experience prove beneficial, as well. The Lord does not always give us what we think we want, and His time frame certainly does not correspond to ours. We continue to trust in His mercy and providential love. Time

and again setbacks and roadblocks have served as His guidance, and the frustration of our own feeble designs has blossomed into something glorious. With firm faith that He will make all manifest in His own good time, we continue to wait upon the Lord.



At the Jampot



The early winter we tentatively predicted during the height of the colors failed to materialize; only now are we beginning to get snow. Winter's arrival around Thanksgiving has been pretty much the rule since we first came into this land, with only a few years having proved exceptional. This year, it would seem, is not among them - and not for its autumn either.

With the departure of summer's heat in mid-September, the colors came on fast. They reached their peak around October first, as conventional wisdom has always said they would. Fading quickly - because of the dry summer, some said -- they enjoyed less than a week of splendid glory before strong winds swiftly took them down.

The brief week of glory proved exceptional for the shop, however. **Jampot** sales on the first Saturday of October exceeded anything it had yet seen this season, the second was the busiest of all time, and the week between surpassed any week

yet known to us. We survived it better than might have been expected. There were many gaping holes in the jam supply, and the variety of bakery was sometimes slim, but we never ran out of fruitcakes, and we always had something of the cookies, muffins, and bars. Most customers left satisfied, even if without their purchase of original intent.

Like the colors, the business faded fast. We caught our breath, filled the several large pick-up orders place by regular customers, and worked on building inventory for the coming internet and mail order sales. On October 22, a week later than usual, **Jampot** closed its doors on the exhilarating and exhausting 2011 season, its most successful yet.

After a week of badly needed rest, we returned to construction - and to production of the many fine items you will find listed on the following pages.



HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE
Society of St. John
6559 State Highway M26
Eagle Harbor, Michigan 49950

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In Thanksgiving

Surviving our first winter was a challenge perhaps greater than any we have met since. The rigor and hardship of our circumstances so impressed themselves on our minds that the first fall gale brings back a flood of memories. But, more than the discomfort and difficulty, it is the peace and simplicity of those early days that we remember. Will we ever attain to that serenity again?

Silly question! The Lord brought us here to build a monastery, not to relax. Time marches on, and we have to make the best of it, accomplishing as much as we can of the work He has allotted to us. Far from mere survival, winter is now for us a time of planning, strategizing, mapping out the future...

Vain endeavors, indeed! Ultimately, we know, this is the Lord's work. It is He who directs it and brings it to fulfillment. We are but

instruments poorly adapted to the task. The puny powers of our minds cannot begin to grasp what He has yet in store. Looking back down the road along which He has taken us, we can only marvel at the richness of His mercy and sing out our gratitude for the wonders He has already wrought.

Certainly, we have seen many in the past twelve months alone, some of constitutive importance for this holy monastery. We thank God for them all, great and small, known and unknown; and we thank those whose co-operation - willing or unwilling - with His divine grace has been instrumental in bringing them about. Above all, we thank all of you who make possible our life here through the support of your patronage, gifts, and prayers.

God grant us all a happy Thanksgiving and a most holy celebration of Christmas.