

Kidane-Mehret

Ge'ez Rite Ethiopian Catholic Church



January 2018

Rev. Abayneh Gebremichael, M.A., B.C.C., Pastor

Divine Liturgy 9:30 am at St. Vincent de Paul, 14M Street SE Washington, DC 20003.

Office: 415 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Ste 65, Washington D.C. 2001

Phone: (202) 756-2756 Fax: (202) 756-2755 E-Mail: kmgeezrite@aol.com

Important Parish Information

Newcomers to the parish: Please fill out your full names and addresses on the Registration Form. The Catholic Church requires that each member of a parish, to the extent allowed by his income, support the day-to-day running of the parish's pastoral activities.

Sacraments and Pastoral Care

Baptisms: Please telephone your pastor at the office to make an appointment to fill out the form and make the necessary arrangements. **Marriages:** It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Washington that couples proposing to marry must first contact, or see, a priest or deacon at least six months prior to the date on which they intend to marry for Marriage Preparation classes. All Catholics are bound to observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage. **Confessions:** are heard before the start of the Divine Liturgy, and any other times by appointment. **Funerals:** Contact your pastor at the parish office to make arrangements. **Hospital Visits:** Notify the pastor if a family member is hospitalized. **Mass Intentions (Stipend):** \$25.00. This is for Memorial Masses, thanksgivings, or petitions.

From the Pastor's Desk

Merry Christmas—Melkam Gena

Every year we celebrate Christmas on January 7, the date of Christ's birth according to the Julian Calendar. The Oriental Churches opted to retain this date even after a new calendar was proposed by Pope Gregory in AD 1582.

So how do we celebrate Christmas in Ethiopia? In Ethiopia we celebrate Gena spiritually and culturally with worship and games.

Spiritually we celebrate the Birth of Christ in the Church. On January 6th, Christmas Eve, all Christians wear traditional clothes and go to their Church to celebrate Christmas by singing, chanting with drums and cymbals, and reenacting Jesus's birth.

Once upon a time there was a king who went on a picnic in the forest with his guards. He saw a poor woman gathering woods and desired her to be his wife. He concerned that the guards object because she was a very poor. He was also afraid that she might not be willing to marry into a royal family. He went back to his palace, pondered a little, then decided to pretend to be a poor farmer. He wore a mud-covered cloth and went to the forest to meet that poor lady. He approached her, gathering wood, and began an ordinary conversation with her. She was attracted to him and when he asked her to be his wife she agreed. He took her to his home.

In a similar way, Jesus also left his heavenly throne to come to our world. He was born into a poor family and came to us to dwell among us. His parents (Mary and Joseph) were ordinary people. He was neither born in a palace nor in a nice home. His birth place in Bethlehem was among poor people in a small room in the manger with cows. He came to be with people of no standing in society. Thus, shepherds were greeted by an angel saying, *"Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."* The shepherds were the first to greet the newborn Babe and filled with awe and delight at receiving the Infant Child into their lives. Motivated by the joy of Jesus's birth they went on to tell the good news to the others.

Why were the shepherds chosen to be the first witnesses? Are they better than others? No, they were considered as impure and not trustworthy. They were segregated from the society. They couldn't go to the temple to pray. God saw their pain and suffering. Yet God still chose them to be among the first to hear the good news of the Messiah's birth.

In the same way we should follow the example of Jesus to love our brothers and sisters in their situation wherever they are at that time. We are called to empathize with and support our brothers and sisters who are neglected by others.



Following Jesus' example, we should live in solidarity with those in need. Jesus said, *"I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."* (Luke 5:32) He wanted to give everyone the chance of a new beginning and to become part of God's family. The shepherds trusted the words of God. Jesus came to give them freedom. By speaking their language and living according to their customs, He became one with them. Even the lowliest knew that He understood their problems and suffering.

Culturally, we enjoy Christmas by playing a special game named Yegan Chaweta that enacts the spirit of Christ Who became man in our midst. All children and young men go out to play this game, which is similar to hockey. The teams are formed by groups from neighboring villages. We use sticks made from the branches of Eucalyptus trees. They look like canes. The small ball is called "Terure" that is made of the root of the tree. Just as in hockey, each team is intent on scoring a goal. The winners, the one with the highest score, will be rewarded.

During this game, no one is allowed to complain or quarrel even if one gets harmed: *"Begenaw Cheweta aykotam Geta"* (God won't count our faults). After the game, everybody comes together to celebrate eating Kolo, bread, lamb sauce, chicken (doro wet), and special drink (Tela).

Sunday Readings for January 2018

Jan 6: Gal 4: 1-11; 1Jn 4: 9-21; Lk 2: 1-20
Jan 14: Rm 15: 1-13; 1Jn 4: 14-21; Mt 2: 19-23
Jan 21: Titus 3: 4-7; 1Jn 5: 5-12; Lk 3:21-38
Jan 28: 2Cor 1: 13-24; 1Jn 2: 22-29; Lk 2: 42-52

Psalms 29: 28-29

All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD;
All the families of nations
will bow low before him.
For kingship belongs to the LORD,
the ruler over the nations.

From a Prayer of St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Lord Jesus, You have come to us as a small child, but You have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of Your eternal love. Caress us with Your tiny hands, embrace us with Your tiny arms, and pierce our hearts with Your soft, sweet cries Amen.

Let us pray for:

All baptized Christians throughout the world that we will show the world that we are Christians by our love for Christ and one another.

The Parish of Kidane-Mehret: for Peace, Unity, Harmony and Charity in the Parish.

For the World: That the King of Peace will reign in every nation and in every heart.

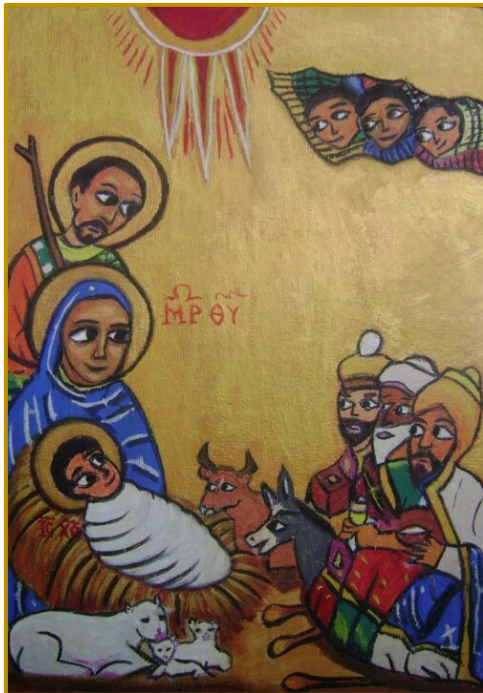
Merry Christmas!

We are merry at Christmas because all the prophecies throughout the ages of a coming messiah-king have at last been fulfilled. Probably the most famous one is: *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel.*” (Isaiah 7:14)

In Micah 5:1 we read,

*“But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah
least among the clans of Judah,
From you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel;
Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times.”*

Even the pagans in the Roman world were told of His coming through oracles. In the Sistine Chapel, five sibyls (pagan oracles) are included with Israelite prophets who predicted the coming of Christ. In one of the oracles He is described as the “Heavenly Offspring [Who] descends from on high.” Dr. Taylor Marshall, in his book ‘Origins of Catholic Christianity, vol. 3, tells us that there is a tradition that the Caesar Augustus learned through a sibyl “that a Hebrew child would silence all the oracles of the Roman gods.” Also, Dr. Marshall tells us that the blessed Virgin holding the Christ Child in Her arms appeared to Caesar Augustus on Rome’s Capitol Hill. Caesar Augustus recognized that the apparition corresponded with the oracle concerning the Hebrew Child. In response, he built an altar honoring the ‘Firstborn of God’.



Three hundred years later, another Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great built a basilica called Basilica of St. Mary of the Altar of God. On the walls of this basilica are murals of Caesar Augustus and the sibyl who received the oracle that once so impressed the emperor.

All the ancient Jewish prophecies are reiterated in the Infancy narratives of the New Testament describing the birth of Jesus. We read of His birth being heralded by the angels singing joyfully in the heavens, *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.”* (Lk2:14) We hear of the magi in far off lands being so amazed by a particular star that they set off immediately to find the Baby that is born “King of Israel.” And we also read of the fear that gripped the hearts of the wicked like Herod. So frightened was he that he had all the baby boys in the area slaughtered in an attempt in ensure that Jesus would not be a threat to him.

The world, it seems, is as miserable as it was in early times, so what does Christmas really mean for us today? First, we need to remember that what we celebrate is not just a heartwarming story but is true history. Christmas, or the Feast of the Incarnation, does not just bring us presents and parties, it brings us hope in the on-going battle against Satan. It is a joy-filled feast because it emphasizes God’s omnipotence and His great love for us. Imagine what it had to be like for the Word of God, a spirit, to become a helpless baby first in the womb of Mary, and then held tenderly in her arms in swaddling clothes; then growing up obedient to Joseph and Mary? All this, so that man could learn that “the Word of the Father is the one true Lord, the Lord even of death.” (St. Athanasius: On the Incarnation, Chapter 5)

“He has not assumed a body as proper to His own nature, far from it, for as the Word He is without a body. He has been manifested in a human body for this reason only, out of the love and goodness of the Father, for the salvation of man.” (St. Athanasius: On the Incarnation, Chapter 1)

Thus we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with great joy and the ardent prayer that all people in the world come to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.



Pope Francis greets the world on Christmas Day...

VATICAN CITY — Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy Christmas!

In Bethlehem, Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. He was born, not by the will of man, but by the gift of the love of God our Father, who “so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

This event is renewed today in the Church, a pilgrim in time. For the faith of the Christian people relives in the Christmas liturgy the mystery of the God who comes, who assumes our mortal human flesh, and who becomes lowly and poor in order to save us. And this moves us deeply, for great is the tenderness of our Father.

The first people to see the humble glory of the Savior, after Mary and Joseph, were the shepherds of Bethlehem. They recognized the sign proclaimed to them by the angels and adored the Child. Those humble and watchful men are an example for believers of every age who, before the mystery of Jesus, are not scandalized by his poverty. Rather, like Mary, they trust in God’s word and contemplate his glory with simple eyes. Before the mystery of the Word made flesh, Christians in every place confess with the words of the Evangelist John: “We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

He ended his message saying: Dear Brothers and Sisters, The sign of Christmas has also been revealed to us: “a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes” (Lk 2:12). Like the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, like the shepherds of Bethlehem, may we welcome in the Baby Jesus the love of God made man for us. And may we commit ourselves, with the help of his grace, to making our world more human and more worthy for the children of today and of the future.

In Washington DC, Donald Cardinal Wuerl celebrated Christmas Eve at St. Matthew’s Cathedral:



After the cardinal blessed the crèche (manger scene) to open the Mass, he said “This is the time of the year when our thoughts necessarily turn to gifts. But what about the perfect gift? ... [F]inding the perfect gift depends so much on what it is we need, want or desire,” Cardinal Wuerl said. “What the Church brings to Christmas is the enduring vision of faith.” It “offers us an opportunity to renew our faith. Ever since the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, the Gospel keeps calling us to remember who he is, what he does for us, and why he really is the perfect gift.

Christmas trees and decorations, enjoying other Christmas traditions are all important if they remind us each year the story of who Jesus is, Cardinal Wuerl noted. “Christmas reminds us of Christ’s world of compassion, kindness, peace and love. Jesus’ kingdom come among us truly is a perfect gift. But we become gifts to others when we try to live the words of the Gospel. What a joy our kindness, compassion and love can be to our family, our friends, all those around us.”

Cardinal Wuerl concluded his homily: “This is the time when we are asked to renew our faith in who Jesus is and what he offers us. On the first Christmas Day, God came among us in the person of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God-with-us. No one in human history has so changed human life as has the infant Son of Mary who was also the Son of God. Once we have come to recognize and believe that Jesus is God-with-us, we can begin to lay hold of the perfect gift. And when we live our faith, its effects in our life become a gift to others.”