

****IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT CONFESSION AND HOLY COMMUNION****

Until further notice, we will continue celebrating the Divine Services up to no more 25 parishioners in attendance. With this in mind, if single parish members or parish member households - UP TO 25 PEOPLE IN CHURCH AT EACH DIVINE LITURGY - would like to attend the Divine Liturgy on a Sunday please refer to the following signup link <https://signup.com/go/AqSQSmX> ** (Slots 1-25 in the Church)! **PLEASE SIGN-UP BY 6:00 PM ON SATURDAY NIGHT!!

Regarding Holy Communion:

- If anyone would like to come and receive Holy Communion or if you would like Fr. Jason to come and bring Holy Communion to your home, please contact him to make arrangements:
jvansuch@hotmail.com/609.851.3811/716.875.4222

Regarding Holy Confession:

Taking into consideration the spiritual and mental healing that comes through the Sacrament of Confession, His Eminence blesses, for all priests and communities in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, that for this period:

- Confession may continue to be held over the telephone or by live video communication; it may also be done in person with social distancing kept between the priest and the penitent (6 feet), and with face masks worn by both. The Prayer of Absolution can be given by video or phone and especially in person.
- When Confession is heard over the telephone or by live video, the priest must read the Prayer of Absolution before ending the phone call or video communication, in the hearing of the penitent.
 - If anyone would like to have Confession, please contact Fr. Jason to make arrangements:
jvansuch@hotmail.com/609.851.3811/716.875.4222

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Please look up the below weblink for the Digital Edition of The Jacobs Well:

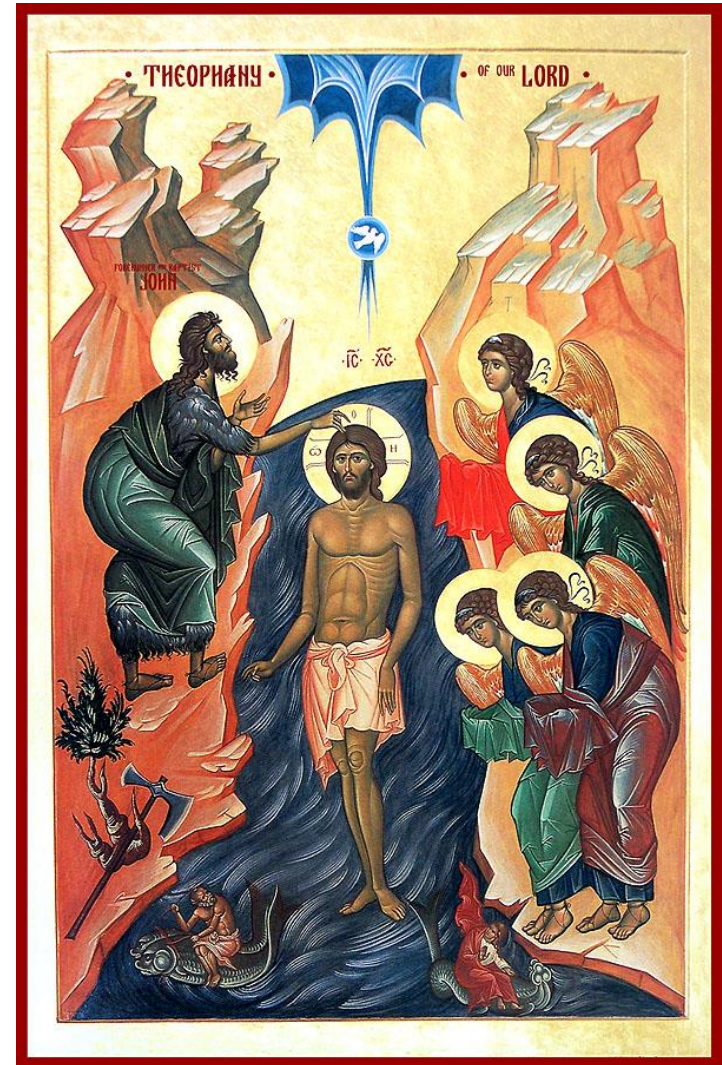
<https://issuu.com/jacobswell/docs/jacobs-well-fall-2019-nk>

Please look up the below weblink for the website of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey:

<https://www.nynjoca.org>

Please look up the below weblink for the newly-updated Diocesan Directives of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey for the Gradual Approach of Re-Opening of our Parishes:

<https://www.nynjoca.org/files/2020/covid-19/Diocesan-Directives-on-the-Gradual-Re-Opening-of-Diocesan-Churches-2020-05-08-For-Distribution.pdf>



St. George Orthodox Church
2 Nottingham Terrace - Buffalo, NY 14216
(716) 875-4222

www.stgeorgebuffalo.com

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Published weekly in the interest of the parishioners and friends of Saint George Orthodox Church, Buffalo, NY a parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and The Orthodox Church in America

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH

2 Nottingham Terrace Buffalo, NY 14216

V. Rev. Jason Vansuch, Parish Priest

2 Nottingham Terrace 716-875-4222 Buffalo, NY 14216

Cell Phone: 609-851-3811 Email: jvansuch@hotmail.com

Presbyter Andreja Damjanovski, Attached Rev. Peter Irfan, Attached

Reader John Kirwan, Choir Director

Mr. Amil Slaiman, Parish Council President

Home: 716-773-2961 Email: aslaiman2014@gmail.com

30th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 5. Forefeast of the Theophany.

Sunday before Theophany. Holy Prophet Malachi (400 B.C.). Martyr Gordius at Cæsarea in Cappadocia (4th c.). Ven. Genevieve of Paris (5th c.).

EPISTLE:
2 Timothy 4:5-8

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
(Sunday Before Theophany)

GOSPEL:
Mark 1:1-8

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

GLORY FOREVER!

****FLOWERS FOR THIS WEEK****

In front of the Icon of Our Lord, In front of the Icon of The Theotokos, and on the Center Icon Table are donated by Bonnie Dan

Altar Vigil Candles are offered by Anthony DelNuovo in Loving Memory of Thy Servant of God – Frank. May his memory be eternal.

TODAY'S WEEKLY MESSENGER IS SPONSORED BY:
ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH

WELCOME TO ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH

We welcome all of you to the Divine Liturgy this morning, especially those who are visiting with us here at St. George Orthodox Church. Everyone is invited to the Parish Fellowship Hall following the Divine Liturgy for Christian Fellowship. It is our prayer that your experience this morning was spiritually uplifting and you will return very soon to pray with our parish family. In the Orthodox Church, we do not practice open Communion. However we do invite everyone to come and participate in the Divine Liturgy. Hence only those Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves through prayer and fasting may receive Holy Communion. May the Lord bless you with many years of good health and happiness.

THE SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY SERVICES and ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY JANUARY 3, 2021

Divine Liturgy – **9:30 AM**

Memorial Litia for Departed Members of The Kirwan Family

“On-The-Go” Coffee Hour Fellowship following Divine Liturgy

MONDAY JANUARY 4, 2021

Royal Hours for The Feast of Holy Theophany– **9:00 AM**

St. George Book Club - **6:30 to 8:00 PM (via Zoom)**

TUESDAY JANUARY 5, 2021 {STRICT FAST DAY} **EVE OF THE GREAT FEAST OF THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

Vespers with Liturgy of St. Basil the Great followed by Lesser Blessing of Water -- **9:00 AM**

Great Compline with Litiya– **4:00 PM**

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 6, 2021

THE GREAT FEAST OF THE HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Festal Divine Liturgy followed by The Great Blessing of Water – **9:30 AM**
Adult Education Class – **6:30 to 8:00 PM (via Zoom)**

SATURDAY JANUARY 9, 2021

Divine Liturgy -- **9:30 AM**

Great Vespers– **4:00 PM**

SUNDAY JANUARY 10, 2021

Divine Liturgy – **9:30 AM**

“On-The-Go” Coffee Hour Fellowship following Divine Liturgy

Church School Class via Google Classroom - **12:30 to 1:15 PM**

*** * * * * PRAYERFUL REMEMBRANCE * * * * ***

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO KEEP IN OUR DAILY PRAYERS
FOR THE HEALTH OF THY SERVANTS:**

HIERARCHS

Metropolitan HERMAN

CLERGY

Archpriest Herman, Matushka Cynthia and George *(Schick)*

Archpriest James and Mat. Patricia *(Mason)*

Archpriest Alexey and his family *(Kargut)*

Archpriest Vladimir and Matushka Jeanne

Archpriest Timothy/Mat. Michelle

Archpriest Michael and Mat. Valerie *(Hatrak)*

Archpriest Ken and Matushka Natalie *(Starevsky)*

Dn. Sean and Mat. Heather *(McNulty)*

Archpriest Gregory and Mat. Diane *(Winsky)*

Priest Peter and Mat. Mary *(Irfan)*

Archpriest Leonid Palceski

Presbyter John and Presbytera Nancy

MATUSHKI

Presbyter Andreja, Popadija Anica and Family

Mat. Katia Mat. Paraskeva Mat. Joanna Popadija Vicki Mat. Christine Mat. Patricia *(Severeno)*

Mat. Gloria *(Martin)*

Stanley Mandy Annette, Amy, John., Kevin

Family/Friends/Parishioners of St. George Orthodox Church

William Natalie Natasha Richie

Catherine Ivan/Marina/Inna Bonnie *(Dan)*

Karen Aliscia *(Nick Rostko)* Walter, Paul

Edwina Irene Luba Silvu Dan, Jr.

Jim, Darren, Marsha *(Relatives of Elaine M.)*

Serena Lillian Reader Victor

Nicholas, Andrew *(Wityk)* Frank

Sarah Albert *(Fadell)* Carol *(Frank's friend)* Boris *(Kuvshinoff)* Marilyn *(Linda cousin)*

Frank Oscar Ronald, Candice *(Masset)*

Xenia, Justin, Kylie, Danielle *(Friends of Fr. Jason)*

Susan *(Kirwan)* June *(Pavlov)*

Victor *(Tita Nephew)* Catherine *(Tony)*

Clyde Allison *(school)*

Evelyn *(Friend of Julie)* Billy *(William – Mat. Christine's cousin)*

Svetlana *(Family friend of Fr. Jason/Mat. Katia)* Joseph *(Judge)*

Rebecca *(Relative of Mat. Christine)* Angela, Jason, Michelle *(Relatives of Dn. Mark)* Linda Justin *(Slaيمان)*

Margaret, Thomas, Victoria *(Ewing)* Ashley *(Friend from Roswell)*

Carole *(Mailman's sister-in-law)* Lee, Bridget *(John Kirwan friend)* Paul *(Shosho)* Brain *(Brother of Matthew Just)*

Kelly, Robert, Boris, Zaeb, Tirza, Sabas Sada Thlisinitsa, Gemmal, Geesa, and Patric *(Fr. Peter)* Child Senit

Anne *(Mariami Grandmother)* Jeremy Stewart *(nephew of Bill George)* Susan *(Zumba)* Juliana *(Matusiak)*

Susan *(Deeb)* Justin *(Cmunt)* Louis *(cousin of Barbara)* Yuri/Elena Alex *(Valieff)* John, Kevin Irene Sean

Jaime *(Zumba)* Vera *(grandmother of Hannah)* Rosemary Harry *(neighbor of Tom and MaryAnne Slaيمان)* Anthony

Robert *(Bonnie Valieff father)* Aspasia *(Dean's Mother)* Charles Seraphim Emma/Alexander *(relatives of Natalie Huett)*

Olga *(Friend of Fr. Jason/Mat. Katia)* Vadym Iryna Yuriy Anastasia Noah *(McEntee)* Elias, John, Joseph

Mary, Hal, Autumn, Ariana, and Amber Judithann *(Friend of Barbara)* Steven *(Uncle of Dean)*

Barbara *(Rdr. John's Sister in Law)* Brian John, Roberta, Barbara *(Family of Dana and Annette)* John, Michael John

Matthew *(Bashira)* John, William *(Friend of Judge Family)* Larry Joseph *(Rocco Father in Law)*

Diocese of NY&NJ Prayer List Rdr Nicholas, Judithann, Michael, Mary, Cate, Michael, Gary, Damian, Olga *(Bethlehem)*

Protospesbyter Leonid *(Kishkovsky)* Archpriest Samuel *(Kedela)* Mitred Archpriest Joseph Lickwar

Archpriest George *(Hasenecz)* Archpriest Paul *(Shafraan)* Costa *(Father of Pete Thanos)*

Archpriest Jonathan *(Ivanoff)* Archpriest Paul *(Kucynda)* Ted *(friend of Paul/Jean)*

Archpriest Sergei and Mat. Gerry *(Glagolev)* Priest Vasili *(Dubee)* Barbara *(Archbishop Michael's Sister)*

Jeffrey, Dominic, Rachel *(Family of Andrea)* Lee, Benjamin, Patrick *(Relatives of Beth Mellas)* John, Helen *(Parents of Tanya Cmunt)*

Expectant Mothers Iris, Peter, Sherry, Mary Jo Larry, Chris *(Friend of MaryAnne Slaيمان)*

Rachel and the child to be born of her Carly *(friend of Judge Family)*

Those Serving in The Armed Forces

Catechumens

Kenneth, Nadine, Jason, Robert, Andrew, Justin, Shawn, Austin,

Juanita Martha

Chris, John, Daniel. Gjorgie

FOR THY DEPARTED SERVANTS OF GOD:

All of the clergy and parishioners of This Holy House who have departed this life, who now lie asleep in the Lord.

Ever-Memorable Archpriest Eugene Vansuch

Ever-Memorable Archpriest George Timko

Ever-Memorable Priest John Bohush

Ever-Memorable Archpriest George Aswad

Ever-Memorable Archpriest Rastko

Matushka Dorothy *(Timko)*

Ever-Memorable Dn. Mark

Ever-Memorable Sbdn. Gregory

Ever-Memorable Pdn. Gregory

Akhtar Remyat, and Barkat *(Family of Fr. Peter)*

Newly-Departed Servants of God

Archbishop DAVID Met. THEODOSIUS Archpriest Bernard

***If anyone would like to have their loved ones added to the prayer list**

for remembrance during the Divine Liturgy, please see or contact Fr. Jason.

HYMNS FOR THE DIVINE LITURGY

Tropars/Kontakions for Divine Liturgy

TROPAR FOR THE RESURRECTION, TONE 5

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead // by His glorious Resurrection.

TROPAR FOR THE FOREFEAST, TONE 4

Prepare, O Zebulon, and adorn thyself, O Naphtali! River Jordan, cease flowing, and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized! Adam, rejoice with our first Mother, and do not hide yourselves as you did of old in Paradise; for having seen you naked, He has appeared to clothe you with the first garment. // Christ has appeared to renew all creation.

Kontakion for The Resurrection – Tone 5

Thou didst descend into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death. Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of man, // and we cry to Thee: “O Lord, save us!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Kontakion for The Holy Prophet Malachi– Tone 4

Endowed with the gift of prophecy, O Malachi, thou didst clearly proclaim the saving coming of Christ to the world. // His brightness has brought light to the whole universe.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion for The ForeFeast– Tone 4

Today the Lord enters the Jordan and cries out to John: “Do not be afraid to baptize Me. // For I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man.”

PROKEMEINON Tone 6

O Lord, save Thy people, / and bless Thine inheritance!

v: To Thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!

ALLELUIA VERSES

O God, be bountiful to us and bless us, show the light of Thy countenance upon us, and have mercy on us.

That we may know Thy way upon the earth, and Thy salvation among all the nations

THE HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

It is truly meet to bless You, O Theotokos, ever blessed and most pure and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim. Without defilement, You gave birth to God the Word, true Theotokos, we magnify You!

COMMUNION HYMN

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

EPISTLE LESSON FOR TODAY

2 Timothy 4:5-8 (*Sunday before*)

My Son Timothy:

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

GOSPEL LESSON FOR TODAY

Mark 1:1-8 (*Sunday before*)

Let us Attend!

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.'"

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.

I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

=== Scriptural Readings for the Week ===

Monday	Hebrews 11:17-23, 27-31	Luke 17:20-25
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 9:19-27	Luke 3:1-18
Wednesday	Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7	Matthew 3:13-17
Thursday	James 1:19-27	Luke 18:31-34
Friday	James 2:1-13	Luke 19:12-28
Saturday	Colossians 1:3-6	Luke 10:19-21
Sunday	Ephesians 4:7-13	Matthew 4:12-17

** NEW PROTOCOLS WHEN ATTENDING THE DIVINE LITURGY ON SUNDAYS.....

- 1) A Parish Council Member will greet everyone at the Front Entrance Doors to the Church. We will have the Sign-Up Sheet there to mark off your name if you signed-up to attend. If we did not sign-up, then we will write your name down and kindly remind you to sign-up before next Sunday.
- 2) EVERYONE attending the Divine Liturgy (those in the Nave and Parish Fellowship Hall – parishioners, choir members, parish council members) NEED to sign-up. Only Those in the Altar do not need to sign-up as they are not taking space in The Nave. Once we reach our capacity of 25 people in The Church, everyone else will be seated in The Parish Fellowship Hall.
- 3) When receiving Holy Communion, a Parish Council Member will call everyone up – pew by pew – to allow for social distancing (the children and Altar Servers will come first, then the first pews up front all the way to the back of the Church with the Choir being the last ones to receive Holy Communion). If any faithful are in The Parish Fellowship Hall, Fr Jason, Fr. Andreja, or Fr. Peter will bring Holy Communion to those in the Hall.

If anyone has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to see or contact Fr. Jason. May God continue to bless and guide all of you!

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2021 PARISH STEWARDSHIP FORM: If we have not returned our 2021 Parish Stewardship Form, please do so by Sunday December 27, 2020. If we need Stewardship Form, please see Fr. Jason or Barbara Kuvshinoff. As we continue to fulfill the work of Our Lord by living and proclaiming the Gospel Message here at St. George's, let us open our hearts and minds and take a moment to reflect upon what God has given us and to discern how we might be able to return to God a portion of the blessings we have received. On behalf of the parish council, we express our most sincere and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone for your continued love, support, and prayers and for all that you do for our parish and for one another and our community in living, proclaiming and being The Gospel of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ!
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ELECTION VOTING BALLOTS ARE DUE THIS FRIDAY JANUARY 8, 2021 If we have not returned our 2021 Parish Stewardship Form, please do so by FRIDAY JANUARY 8, 2021. If we need the ballots, please see Fr. Jason. On behalf of the parish council, we express our most sincere and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone for your continued love, support, and prayers and for all that you do for our parish and for one another and our community in living, proclaiming and being The Gospel of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ!
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**THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATERS
 HOYT LAKE – DELAWARE PARK
 SUNDAY JANUARY 10, 2021
 1:30 PM**

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**THE DIVINE LITURGY FOLLOWED BY THE BLESSING OF WATERS
 FOR THE CHURCH SCHOOL CHILDREN and FAMILIES
 SATURDAY JANUARY 9, 2021
 9:30 AM**

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LIVE-STREAMING OF DIVINE SERVICES

As a friendly reminder, ALL DIVINE SERVICES, WILL ALSO BE LIVE-STREAMED from Fr. Jason's Facebook page and our Parish Youtube Page so that we can still be together and pray together. So please continue to join us in prayer!! There are three ways you can join us in prayer via Live-Stream even if we do not have a FaceBook account:

- 1) **Go directly to our Parish Website (www.stgeorgebuffalo.com) and on our homepage you will see a a box that says 'Restream: Stream currently offline". When 'live-stream' is active, the live video will automatically appear.**
- 2) **Go directly to Fr. Jason's Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/jason.vansuch> and there you will see the Live-stream video.**
- 3) **Go directly to our Parish Youtube Page <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCft4AWAX2COorLZExfMJc5KQ> and there you will see the Live-stream video.**

Be on the lookout for The January Issue of "The Trophy Bearer". Also in the Parish Fellowship Hall, we have the Giving Tree! If anyone would like to sign up for Coffee Hour Readers Bulletin Collection, Communion Cloth, Home Blessing, please see or contact Fr. Jason!

WELCOME TO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH!

Do we have questions about our life, its meaning, purpose, destiny?
Are we desiring to know Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God?
Are we seeking forgiveness, healing, and wholeness?
Do we wonder where to go to find answers?

We can find the answers to these questions and so many other questions
in The Holy Orthodox Church through Her Sacred Tradition,
Holy Scriptures, Her Teachings and Dogmas.

The Orthodox Church is the original Christian Church, the Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ and described in the pages of the New Testament. Her history can be traced in unbroken continuity all the way back to Christ and His Twelve Apostles, empowered and sent forth on the day of Holy Pentecost. Incredible as it seems, for over twenty centuries she has continued in her undiminished and unaltered faith and practice. Today her apostolic doctrine, worship, and structure remain intact. The Orthodox Church maintains that the Church is the living Body of Jesus Christ. Many of us are surprised to learn that for the first 1000 years of Christian history there was just one Church.

Where is "**The Church**" to be found and experienced today? Come Taste and See How Good The Lord is every Sunday by joining us for The Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM.

What is Orthodox Christianity all about? How does it differ from other Christian confessions? This section will attempt to answer these questions and many more. For a visual introduction to the Orthodox Church, please view the video link below: http://www.youtube.com/v/Gj4pUphDitA&color1=0xb1b1b1&color2=0xcfcfcf&feature=player_embedded&fs=1 For a brief introduction and in depth study to The Orthodox Faith and to find answers to: "What we Believe?", "Who we Are?", and "How we Live?", please view the PDF link below:

<http://orthodoxdelmarva.org/files/studies/InquirersClassV1final.pdf>

or you may visit the OCA website by clicking the link below:

<http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith>

or you can begin a Journey Through Orthodoxy by clicking the link below:

<http://journeytoorthodoxy.com>

To learn more ways that we can teach our children about the Orthodox Faith, The OCA has provided a wonderful website for us to use that provides great resources such as (handouts, texts, articles, stories, and much more)! To see this great website, please view the PDF link below:

<http://dce.oca.org/page/resources/>

If you have any questions or would like to know more about The Orthodox Faith, please contact our parish priest: V Rev. Jason Vansuch (jvansuch@hotmail.com) or 716.875.4222 and he will be able guide you.

IMPORTANT DATES WITHIN THE LIFE OF OUR PARISH

Parish Announcements:

- We will continue with our on-going collections for The Buffalo City Mission, Hearts for Homeless, Mats for Mission, HomeSpace as well as Kevin Guest House and our other outreach ministry projects.
- **WE CONTINUE TO CONTACT ALL OF OUR PARISHIONERS ON A REGULAR BASIS TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE IS OKAY, SAFE AND HEALTHY.**

****Please be on the lookout for emails this week with the following items:**

- 1) **Reader Vespers for Saturday Evening (January 9)**
- 2) **Reader Typika Service for Sunday Morning (January 10)**
- 3) **Information for St. George Bible Study – Monday (January 4)**
- 4) **Information for Inquirer Class – Wednesday (January 6)**

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**BEGINNING IN SEPTEMBER, WE WILL BE RECORDING
THE WEEKLY INCOME FOR EACH SUNDAY AS WELL AS OFFERING THE
MONTHLY INCOME and EXPENSE FOR OUR PARISH!**

**INCOME FOR SUNDAY December 27, 2020 – \$1,462.00
DONATIONS FOR THE NEW BOILER (Capital Improvement Fund) –
Total Donations so far for the New Boiler: \$19,030.00**

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS YOU AND GUIDE YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND PRAYERS!

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Please refer to the Weekly Bulletin and Church Website for any changes to the calendar!

DAILY FAMILY PRAYER RULE WE CAN PRAY TOGETHER AT HOME WITH OUR FAMILIES

A Prayer Rule must be done in front of the icons and the Gospel in our Icon Corners with a lit candle.. It is important to remember that we must make time for God, for the "Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force"(Matt. 11:12).The best time to pray is in the morning or in the evening when we as a family can come together in prayer. Also, when using a Rule of Prayer, we must be flexible and do what we can and do it attentively and consistently. Our goal is to maintain the connection with God and cultivate a real relationship with Him.

With that in mind, please find below The Rule of Prayer offered by our Diocese for us to use at home especially during this most difficult time when we are not able to be in church together as a parish family.

<https://www.nynjoca.org/files/2020/praying-at-home/A-FAMILY-PRAYER-RULE.pdf>

May God bless you and keep you always in His Loving Care!

ST. ANDREW'S CAMP

** Saint Andrew's Camp has released a new promotional video for prospective campers!

The video can be found here on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/saintandrewsorthodoxcamp/videos/357928144820497/>

**Be sure to check it out...you may recognize the priest:)

For more than sixty years, St. Andrew's Camp has offered the young people of our parishes an incredible summer camping experience. Children and teens have been instructed in prayer and the divine services, the reading of Scripture and the teachings of our Orthodox Church. They have been nourished with the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. They have had fun swimming, horseback riding, playing sports, singing and learning musical instruments, creating in the visual arts, learning to safeguard the planet, and exploring the stars. And they have established friendships that last a lifetime, met their future spouses, and nurtured their vocations to serve the Lord in ministry.

As a token of gratitude for the labors of love extended by the administration and staff, both clergy and laypersons, of St. Andrew's over the past six decades, it is now time for us to help the Camp in an especially needed way.

Please join us in raising funds for the new multi purpose building which will include new kitchen, dining hall and activities center. The cost of this new building is \$300,000. To become a reality, the completion and furnishing of this much-needed center will require great generosity of individuals, organizations and parishes.

You can click on the link below which will take you to the gofundme.com page.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/st-andrew039s-camp-fundraiser-by-ss-peter-and-paul>

As we continue to fulfill the work of Our Lord by living and fulfilling His Gospel Message, let us open our hearts and minds by providing support and assistance to our Diocese, to our children, by taking a moment to reflect upon what God has given us, and to discern how we might be able to return to God a portion of the blessings we have received.

We extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of you and your families for your continued prayers, support and generosity.

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**Also, make sure we check out the promotional video for prospective campers!

The video can be found here on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/saintandrewsorthodoxcamp/videos/357928144820497/>

**Be sure to check it out...you may recognize the priest:)

Remember our Loved Ones during Our Daily Prayers

'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

{Matt. 25:40}

As we say our daily prayers, let us also take time out to remember our loved ones who are homebound, who are in hospitals and who are in nursing homes. Let us remember them that GOD will continue to watch over them and protect them. Also, during the Year, let us take to either send them a card, give them a call, or visit them to let them know how much we love them, how much we remember them, and how much we pray for them.

Please refer to the of our Parish Shut-Ins below.

If anyone has any questions or would like to add someone to our List of Parish Shut-Ins, please see or contact Fr. Jason. May God continue to bless you and guide you!

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH PARISH SHUT-INS (2020)

Mrs. Diane Salvamoser
147 West Hazeltine Avenue
Kenmore, NY 14217
716.875.9503

Reader Victor Shanchuk
495 Lafayette Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.881.3096

Mrs. Luba Japadjief
Elderwood Nursing Home (Memory Care Unit)
245 Bassett Road
Williamsville, NY (Room 30)

Mrs. Catherine Tony
274 Wadsworth Ave.
Tonawanda, NY 14150
716.695.3068

Mr. Albert Fadell
317.376.2562

Andrew Wityk
Ellicott Center
200 Seventh Street
Buffalo, NY 14201

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WEEKLY VIDEO SERMONS GIVEN BY HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL

These sermons offered to us by The Diocese via video can be found on the Diocesan Website: <http://www.nynjoca.org>! There are videos for each week beginning with The Feast of Feasts – Holy Pascha! Be sure to check them out!

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An Invitation to Support the Stewards of the OCA!

The Orthodox Church in America (OCA) set the direction for expanding our apostolic work in North America at the 18th All-American Council. The foundation for this work is Jesus Christ, Whom we encounter in our spiritual lives, stewardship, evangelism and outreach, and relations with others as we engage the world. Being a steward of the OCA goes beyond the financial gifts which support the work of our church. Being a steward is about caring for and knowing the history of the mission of the Orthodox Church here in North America and finding your place in that history. Having received this great gift of our Orthodox Faith, we bear the responsibility to continue the legacy of Saint Herman and Saint Tikhon; Saint Innocent and Saint Alexis and all the other saints known and unknown who have worked to build up and expand Christ's Church here in North America. Please consider being a part of that mission today by giving to the Stewards of the OCA. For more information, please visit The OCA Website: <https://oca.org/become-a-steward>

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An Invitation to Support the Ministry of the DDB!

In order to fund necessary ministries and fulfill the work of the Church in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors** generously contribute financial support. To learn more about the DDB, please go to the following link: <http://vimeo.com/71021182> and watch a 60 second video inviting you to join the ever-growing list of Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey who joyfully support the on-going work of our diocese. Their support allows us to provide assistance to new mission parishes, scholarships to seminarians, support the departments of The Diocese, and much-needed encouragement to older struggling parishes. How about you? Our parish is a member of the DDB. If anyone would like to join, please see Fr. Jason as well as take a pamphlet from the table in the back of the church. May God continue to bless and guide you for your continued support. The Diocese of New York and New Jersey has two monthly newsletters: "**First Fruits**" and "**Beyond the Plateau**." The goal, as expressed by Archbishop Michael, is to increase communication and grow the communal spirit of diocesan fellowship in the building-up and strengthening of our parish communities. To learn more about these monthly diocesan publications, please refer to the diocesan website: <http://www.nynjoca.org/newsletters.html>.

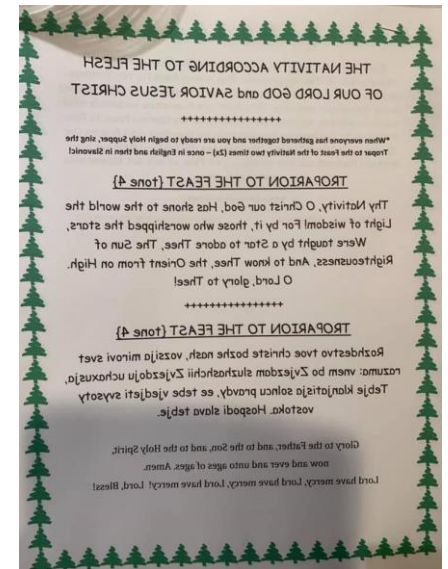
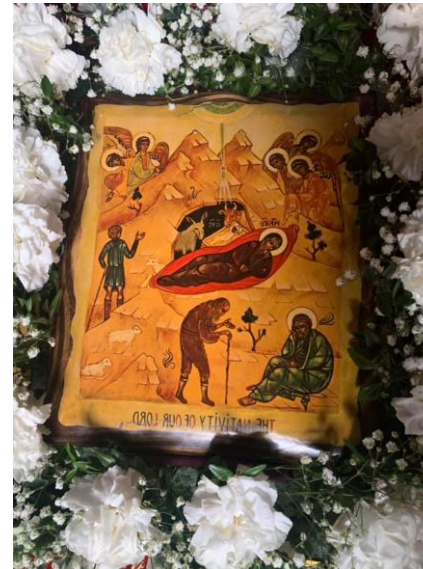
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"Lessons in Our Faith" Video presented by His Eminence Archbishop MICHAEL

His Eminence Archbishop Michael presents a series of talks on matters of faith, belief, and the teachings of the Church. These instructional videos are concise and "to the point," offering Orthodox Christians much-needed information, helpful advice for their spiritual journey, and assistance in answering questions that may come from non-Orthodox friends or acquaintances. The goal is that we might better know and better live our faith. These instructional videos can be found at the Diocesan Website: <http://www.nynjoca.org>! For those who do not have internet, please see the handouts from each lesson which are located on the table in the back of the church. **There are 14 videos! Be sure to check them out!**

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH BOOKSTORE

As you are in the Parish Fellowship Hall for coffee hour, don't forget to check out our newly-formed Bookstore. We have some new items that just arrived. These items include: Icon ornaments, jewelry, Icons, prayer books, prayers ropes, and much more. If you need a Gift, come check out the Bookstore...you may find something you like!! We are now also offering Gift Certificates for our Bookstore. Please speak with Dave or Andrea for more details/information!! We thank David and Andrea Chmiel who are managing of our Bookstore for us. If you have any questions or if you would like to order something that you do not see, please see or contact David or Andrea Chmiel and they will be able to assist you. You may also email them at: bookstore@stgeorgebuffalo.com. May GOD continue to bless and guide all of you.



ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH

2021 HOME BLESSING SCHEDULE

The Blessing of Homes

POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER PASCHA

The custom of blessing homes during the Theophany season is of special beauty and significance. It is not simply a sentimental tradition without meaning, nor is it a custom whose meaning we have forgotten, like an old friend whose face we remember, but whose impact on our life has been forgotten.

When an Orthodox Christian believer moves into a new home, he dedicates his new home as the abode of a follower of Christ. He asks that God, the source of all goodness and the Giver of every perfect gift, to bless his house and all that is within it; he recalls that Jesus Christ, His Son, came to bring Salvation to all, even as He brought Salvation to the house of Zaccheus; he prays that the Holy Spirit may abide in it, guiding those who dwell in it in the Paths of righteousness.

On the Feast of Theophany we rededicate our home for its original purpose, just as we must periodically rededicate our life to Christ. We do it especially on this Feast because this is the day on which we remember in the Church Year the coming of Christ who began His Ministry when He descended into Jordan to be Baptized by St. John the Forerunner and Baptist. He enters again into our lives reminding us that we must "repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."

An Orthodox Christian must dedicate not only himself and his house to the Lord, but his daily work and all his efforts as well. All things are to be done to the glory of God. That is why in the Orthodox Church, not only religious objects, such as icons, crosses, churches and vestments, are blessed, but also homes, fields, animals and all objects which are used in our daily life for the good of man. In this the Church expresses its faith that the Holy Spirit's sanctifying action extends over the whole Creation.

The Feast Of Theophany

The Feast of Theophany (or Epiphany) commemorates the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. We know from the troparion of the day that "the Trinity was made manifest" to us. But there's more to it than this. "When Jesus descends into the depths of the river, there occurs a profound upheaval. It is not the one baptized who is purified, for he is spotless; but it is the water that is transfigured and illumined. This water, which was believed to be transparent and purifying, is in fact polluted, inhabited by evil spirits, servants of the old gods. ... By purifying the elements, by sanctifying matter, Jesus frees the cosmos from the powers of evil." (*The Incarnate God, Vol. I*, Catherine Aslanoff, French edition editor, translated by Paul Meyendorff, p.163.)

The Great Blessing of Water and the Home

The Great Blessing of Water takes place at the end of that day's Liturgy. Since our homes cannot be brought to the Church, the Church - through the priest and cantor - go to the homes. There the service of blessing, which began in the church, is finished with the sprinkling of water in the home. Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany (January 6/13). By sanctifying our living quarters, our private place, we extend the grace of God to our individual dwellings. (In very large parishes a yearly visit may not be possible. In areas of the country where the winter is harsh, I know of at least one parish where houses are blessed at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year in September.)

We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life. "There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day." (*Little Falcons: Water*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998, p.33.)

Weaving Christ into Our Lives

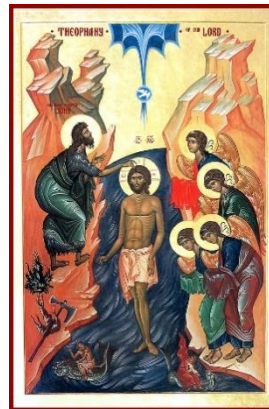
The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings." (*Marriage and the Christian Home*, p.25.)

If the priest comes to bless the home when the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home.

In Summary

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!

If anyone would like to have their home blessed this year, please contact Fr. Jason with any specific day and time that would be best for him to come and bless your home. You can contact Fr. Jason at (716) 875-4222 or (609)851-3811 or email him at jvansuch@hotmail.com and he will be in contact with you to make other arrangements. As Fr. Jason makes his pastoral visitations to the homes of the parishioners, he will use the sign-up sheet as a guideline for him to follow. If anyone has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to let Fr. Jason know. May God continue to bless and guide all of you and your families. May you have a Holy and Blessed Nativity of Our Lord, a Holy and Blessed Theophany Season and a Blessed, Healthy, and Happy New Year.



THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATERS HOYT LAKE – DELAWARE PARK SUNDAY JANUARY 10, 2021 1:30 PM

Let us come together during this Holy Theophany Season, and join the clergy and the faithful from our sister parishes as we bless the waters of Hoyt Lake in Delaware Park.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO HOYT LAKE

START: 2 Nottingham Terrace, Buffalo, NY 14216
Head south on Nottingham Terrace toward Meadow Rd
Turn left onto Elmwood Ave

Turn left onto Iroquois Dr

Turn right onto Lincoln Pkwy

END: Destination will be on the left: 199 Lincoln Parkway, Buffalo, NY 14222

January 6



During the time that John the Forerunner preached on the banks of the Jordan River and baptized people, Jesus Christ reached thirty years of age. He also went from Nazareth to the Jordan River to John to receive baptism from him.

John did not consider himself worthy to baptize Jesus Christ and began to shrink back from Him saying, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

But Jesus answering said to Him, "Suffer it to be so now," — that is, do not hold back from me now, "for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," — to fulfill everything in the Law of God and to set an example for people. Then, John obeyed and baptized Jesus Christ.

Upon completion of the baptism, when Jesus Christ came out of the water, suddenly the heavens were opened over Him; and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him and heard the voice of God the Father from Heaven saying, "*This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.*"

Then, John was finally convinced that Jesus was the expected Messiah, Son of God, Saviour of the world.

The Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ is celebrated in the Holy Orthodox Church as one of the great feasts on *January 6th*. The celebration of the Baptism of the Lord is also called *Theophany* or the Manifestation of God because at the time of baptism God revealed Himself to people as the Holy Trinity

in this way: *God the Father* spoke from Heaven, the incarnate *Son of God* was baptized, and the *Holy Spirit* descended in as a dove. Also, at the time of baptism for the first time, people could see that in the person of Jesus Christ there appeared not only man but also *God*.

The day before the feast is an established fast day. The same strict fast is observed and the same types of services are celebrated as on the Eve of Christ's Nativity (Christmas). Because the Saviour by His own baptism sanctified the water, on this feast there is a blessing of water. On the day before, water is blessed in church and on the feast itself – under the open sky, in rivers, lakes, pools and wells. This Blessing of the Waters is often called "*The Procession to the Jordan*."

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Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by the St John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism

also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of St Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast.

There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and St Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. St John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but "to bury human sin by water," to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify "the nature of water" and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three

Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Indivisible. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms.

The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).

On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday.

DISCOURSE ON THE FEAST OF THE THOPHANY OF OUR LORD
St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

We shall now say something about the present feast [of Holy Theophany, the Baptism of Christ]. Many celebrate the feastdays and know their designations, but the cause for which they were established they know not. Thus concerning this, everyone knows that the present feast is called Theophany; but what this is, and whether it be one thing or another, they know not. And this is shameful—

every year to celebrate the feastday and not know its meaning. First of all therefore, it is necessary to say that there is not one Theophany, but two: the one actual, which already has occurred, and the second in the future, which will happen with glory at the end of the world. About this one and about the other you will hear today from Paul, who in conversing with Titus, speaks thus about the present: "The grace of God hath revealed itself, having saved all mankind, decreeing, that we reject iniquity and worldly desires, and dwell in the present age in prudence and in righteousness and piety." And about the future: "Awaiting the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13). And a prophet speaks thus about this latter: "The sun shalt turn to darkness, and the moon to blood at first, then shalt come the great and illuminating Day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31). Why is not that day, on which the Lord was born, considered Theophany— but rather this day on which He was baptised? This present day it is, on which He was baptised and sanctified the nature of water. Because on this day all, having obtained the waters, do carry it home and keep it all year, since today the waters are sanctified. And an obvious phenomenon occurs: these waters in their essence do not spoil with the passage of time, but obtained today, for one whole year and often for two or three years, they remain unharmed and fresh, and afterwards for a long time do not stop being water, just as that obtained from the fountains.

Why then is this day called Theophany? Because Christ made Himself known to all – not then when He was born, but when He was baptised. Until this time He was not known to the people. And that the people did not know Him, Who He was, listen to what John the Baptist says: “Amidst you standeth Him Whom ye know not of” (John 1:26). And is it surprising that others did not know Him, when even the Baptist did not know Him until that day? “And I – said he – knew Him not: but He that did send me to baptise with water, about this One did tell unto me: over Him that shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, this One it is Who baptiseth in the Holy Spirit” (John 1:33). Thus from this it is evident, that there are two Theophanies, and why Christ comes at baptism and on whichever baptism He comes, about this... it is necessary to know both the one and equally the other. And first it is necessary to speak your love about the latter, so that we might learn about the former. There was a Jewish baptism, which cleansed from bodily impurities, but not to remove sins. Thus, whoever committed adultery, or decided on thievery, or who did some other kind of misdeed, it did not free him from guilt. But whoever touched the bones of the dead, whoever tasted food forbidden by the law, whoever approached from contamination, whoever consorted with lepers – that one washed, and until evening was impure, and then cleansed. “Let one wash his body in pure water” – it says in the Scriptures – “and he will be unclean until evening, and then he will be clean” (Leviticus 15:5, 22:4).

This was not truly of sins or impurities, but since the Jews lacked perfection, then God, accomplishing it by means of this greater piety, prepared them by their beginnings for a precise observance of important things. Thus, Jewish cleansings did not free from sins, but only from bodily impurities. Not so with ours: it is far more sublime and it manifests a great grace, whereby it sets free from sin, it cleanses the spirit and bestows the gifts of the Spirit. And the baptism of John was far more sublime than the Jewish, but less so than ours: it was like a bridge between both baptisms, leading across itself from the first to the last. Wherefore John did not give guidance for observance of bodily purifications, but together with them he exhorted and advised to be converted from vice to good deeds and to trust in the hope of salvation and the accomplishing of good deeds, rather than in different washings and purifications by water. John did not say, “wash your clothes, wash your body, and ye will be pure,” but rather, “bear ye fruits worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3:8). Since it was more than of the Jews, but less than ours, the baptism of John did not impart the Holy Spirit and it did not grant forgiveness by grace. It gave the commandment to repent, but it was powerless to absolve sins. Wherefore John did also say: “I baptise you with water... That One however will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). Obviously, he did not baptise with the Spirit.

But what does “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” mean? Call to mind that day, on which for the Apostles “there

appeared disparate tongues like fire, and sat over each one of them" (Acts 2:3). That the baptism of John did not impart the Spirit and remission of sins is evident from the following [words of] Paul, [who] "found certain disciples, and said to them: received ye the Holy Spirit since ye have believed? They said to him: but furthermore whether it be of the Holy Spirit, we shall hear. He said to them: into what were ye baptised? They answered: into the baptism of John. Paul then said: John indeed baptised with the baptism of repentance" – repentance, but not remission of sins; for whom did he baptise? "Having proclaimed to the people, that they should believe in the One coming after him, namely, Christ Jesus... they were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus: and Paul laying his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them" (Acts 19:1-6). Do you see, how incomplete was the baptism of John? If the one were not incomplete, would then Paul have baptised them again, and placed his hands on them? Having performed also the second, he showed the superiority of the apostolic Baptism and that the baptism of John was far less than his. Thus, from this we recognise the difference of the baptisms.

Now it is necessary to say, for whom was Christ baptised and by which baptism? Neither the former, the Jewish, nor the last – ours. Whence hath He need for remission of sins, how is this possible for Him, Who hath not any sins? "Of sin," it says in the Scriptures, "worked He not, nor was there deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). And further, "who of you convicteth Me of sin?" (John 8:46). And His

flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit. How might this be possible, when it in the beginning was fashioned by the Holy Spirit? And so, if His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit, and He was not subject to sins, then for whom was He baptised? But first of all it is necessary for us to recognise, by which baptism He was baptised, and then it will be clear for us. By which baptism indeed was He baptised? Not the Jewish, nor ours, nor John's. For whom, since thou from thine own aspect of baptism dost perceive, that He was baptised not by reason of sin and not having need of the gift of the Spirit. Therefore, as we have demonstrated, this baptism was alien to the one and to the other. Hence it is evident, that He came to Jordan not for the forgiveness of sins and not for receiving the gifts of the Spirit, but so that some from those present then should not think that He came for repentance like others. Listen to how John precluded this: What he then spoke to the others then was, "Bear ye fruits worthy of repentance." But listen to what he said to Him: "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and Thou art come to me?" (Matthew 3:8, 14). With these words he demonstrated, that Christ came to him not through that need with which people came, and that He was so far from the need to be baptised for this reason – so much more sublime and perfectly purer than Baptism itself. For whom was He baptised, if this was done not for repentance, nor for the remission of sins, nor for receiving the gifts of the Spirit? Through the other two reasons, of which the one the disciple speaks, and about the other He Himself spoke to John. Which reason of this baptism did John declare?

Namely, that Christ should become known to the people, as Paul also mentions: “John therefore baptised with the baptism of repentance, so that through him they should believe on Him that cometh” (Acts 19:4). This was the consequence of the baptism. If John had gone to the home of each and, standing at the door, had spoken out for Christ and said: “He is the Son of God,” such a testimony would have been suspicious, and this deed would have been extremely perplexing. So too, if he in advocating that Christ had gone into the synagogues and witnessed to Him, this testimony of his might be suspiciously fabricated. But when all the people thronged out from all the cities to Jordan and remained on the banks of the river, and when He Himself came to be baptised and received the testimony of the Father by a voice from above and by the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove, then the testimony of John about Him was made beyond all questioning. And since he said: “and I knew Him not” (John 1:31), his testimony put forth is trustworthy. They were kindred after the flesh between themselves, “wherefore Elizabeth, thy kinswoman, hath also conceived a son” – said the Angel to Mary about the mother of John (Luke 1: 36). If, however, the mothers were relatives, then obviously so also were their children. Thus, since they were kinsmen, in order that it should not seem that John would testify concerning Christ because of kinship, the grace of the Spirit organised it such, that John spent all his early years in the wilderness, so that it should not seem that John had declared his testimony out of friendship or some similar reason. But John, as he was instructed of God, thus

also announced about Him, wherein also he did say: “and I knew Him not.” From whence didst thou find out? “He, having sent me that sayeth to baptise with water, [is] the One [Who] did tell me” What did He tell thee? “Over Him thou shalt see the Spirit descending, like to a dove, and abiding over Him, that One is baptised by the Holy Spirit” (John 1:32-33). Dost thou see, that the Holy Spirit did not descend as in a first time then coming down upon Him, but in order to point out that preached by His inspiration – as though by a finger – it pointed Him out to all. For this reason He came to baptism.

And there is a second reason, about which He Himself spoke. What exactly is it? When John said, “I have need to be baptised of Thee, and Thou art come to me?” He answered thus: “Stay now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill every righteousness” (Matthew 3:14-15). Dost thou see the meekness of the servant? Dost thou see the humility of the Master? What does He mean, “to fulfill every righteousness?” By righteousness is meant the fulfillment of all the commandments, as is said: “both were righteous, walking faultlessly in the commandments of the Lord” (Luke 1:6). Since fulfilling this righteousness was necessary for all people – but no one of them kept it or fulfilled it – Christ came then and fulfilled this righteousness.

And what righteousness is there, someone will say, in being baptised? Obedience for a prophet was righteous. As Christ was circumcised, offered sacrifice, kept the sabbath and observed the Jewish feasts, so also He added this remaining thing, that He was obedient to having been baptised by a prophet. It was the will of God, then, that all should be baptised – about which John speaks: “He having sent me to baptise with water” (John 1:33); so also Christ: “The publicans and the people do justify God, having been baptised with the baptism of John; the pharisees and the lawyers reject the counsel of God concerning themselves, not having been baptised by him” (Luke 7:29-30). Thus, if obedience to God constitutes righteousness, and God sent John to baptise the nation, then Christ has also fulfilled this along with all the other commandments. Consider, that the commandments of the law are the main point of the two denarii. Our race needed to pay this debt; but we did not pay it, and we, falling under such an accusation, were embraced by death. Christ came, and finding us afflicted by it, paid the debt, fulfilled the necessary and seized from it those who were not able to pay. Wherefore He does not say: “It is necessary for us to do this or that,” but rather “to fulfill every righteousness.” “It is for Me, being the Master,” says He, “proper to make payment for the needy.” Such was the reason for His baptism – wherefore they should see that He had fulfilled all the law – both this reason and also that, about which was spoken of before. Wherefore also the Spirit descended as a dove, because where there is reconciliation with God – there also is the dove. So also in the ark of Noah

the dove brought the branch of olive – a sign of God’s love of mankind and of the cessation of the flood. And now in the form of a dove, and not in a body – this particularly deserves to be noted – the Spirit descended, announcing the universal mercy of God and showing with it, that the spiritual man needs to be gentle, simple and innocent, as Christ also says: “Except ye be converted and become as children, ye shalt not enter into the Heavenly Kingdom” (Matthew 18:3). But that ark, after the cessation of the flood, remained upon the earth; this ark, after the cessation of wrath, is taken to heaven, and now this Immaculate and Imperishable Body is situated at the right hand of the Father. Having made mention about the Body of the Lord, I shall also say a little about this, and then the conclusion of the talk. Many now will approach the Holy Table on the occasion of the feast. But some approach not with trembling, but shoving, hitting others, blazing with anger, shouting, cursing, roughing it up with their fellows with great confusion. What, tell me, art thou troubled by, my fellow? What disturbeth thee? Do urgent affairs, for certain, summon thee? At this hour art thou particularly aware that these affairs of thine that thou particularly rememberest, that thou art situated upon the earth, and dost thou think to mix about with people? But is it not with a soul of stone naturally to think, that in such a time thou stand upon the earth, and not exult with the Angels with whom to raise up victorious song to God? For this Christ also did describe us with eagles, saying, “where the corpse is, there are the eagles gathered” (Matthew 24:28) – so that we might have

risen to heaven and soared to the heights, having ascended on the wings of the spirit. But we, like snakes, crawl upon the earth and eat dirt. Having been invited to supper, thou, although satiated before others, would not dare to leave before others while others are still reclining. But here, when the sacred doings are going on, thou at the very middle would pass by everything and leave? Is it for a worthy excuse? What excuse might it be? Judas, having communed that last evening on that final night, left hastily as all the others were still reclining. Here these also are in imitation of him, who leave before the final blessing! If he had not gone, then he would not have made the betrayal; if he did not leave his co-disciples, then he would not have perished; if he had not removed himself from the flock, then the wolf would not have seized and devoured him alone; if he had separated himself from the Pastor, then he would not have made himself the prey of wild beasts. Wherefore he (Judas) was with the Jews, and those (the apostles) went out with the Lord. Dost thou see, by what manner the final prayer after the offering of the sacrifice is accomplished? We should, beloved, stand forth for this, we should ponder this, fearful of the coming judgement for this. We should approach the Holy Sacrifice with great decorum, with proper piety, so as to merit us more of God's benevolence, to cleanse one's soul and to receive eternal blessings, of which may we all be worthy by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom with the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, and worship now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God. A primary goal of Stewardship is to promote spiritual growth and strengthen faith. Becoming a Steward begins when we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty and trust and act on those beliefs. As Stewards, we affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. Stewardship calls on the faithful to cheerfully offer back to God a portion of the gifts with which they have been blessed. **Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges** accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God by teaching and giving examples of a virtuous life to all (St. John Chrysostom). A primary goal of Stewardship is to strengthen our understanding of the teachings and dogmas of The Orthodox Faith through supporting the work of The Church. This can be found in The Divine Services as reiterated by St. John of San Francisco: "The Divine Services in their composition contain all the fullness of the dogmatic teaching of the Church and set forth the path of salvation." Fulfilling our responsibility of continual learning begins when we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty and trust and act on those beliefs. Through being Stewards of the Gospel and of The Orthodox Church, Education

calls on the faithful to cheerfully receive instruction given to the Church by Our Lord, Holy Scripture, The Divine Services, and The Holy Fathers of the Church. Through Orthodox Christian Stewardship, The Church promotes spiritual growth and strengthened faith and calls on all of us to bring the faith and love of Our Lord to every aspect of our lives as gifts from Him through our time, talents, and treasures. During this year, let us come together as a Diocesan Family and recommit ourselves to both spiritual growth of our Life in Christ as well as through Orthodox Christian Stewardship by attending the Divine Services, attending the many opportunities of Education for both Adults and Children through Parish Education, gatherings, and fellowship and by supporting our Parishes and Diocese in the many endeavors through which, by the Grace of God, we will bring the light and love of Our Lord to all!

LET ALL THAT YOU DO BE DONE IN LOVE. 1 Cor.16:14

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. Matt. 22:37

YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. Matt. 22:39

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU. Matt. 5:44

LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND, LOVE DOES NOT ENVY, LOVE DOES NOT BOAST, LOVE IS NOT PROUD, LOVE IS NOT SELFISH, LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED. 1Cor. 13:4

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS, LOVE ALWAYS HAS FAITH, LOVE ALWAYS HAS HOPE, LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS. LOVE NEVER FAILS! 1Cor. 13:7,8