

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

Rev. Peter Irfan, Attached

Mat. Katia Vansuch, Choir Director

Dr. Boris Kuvshinoff, Parish Council President

Home: 716-812-6132 Email: boris.kuvshinoff@gmail.com

31st SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – Tone 6. Afterfeast of the Theophany . Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John. Sunday after Theophany.

EPISTLE:	Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	GOSPEL:
Ephesians 4:7-13	(Sunday After)	Matthew 4:12-17
Acts 19:1-8	(Forerunner)	John 1:29-34

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 St. George Orthodox Church!

Altar Vigil Candles are offered by Anthony DelNuovo in Loving Memory of Thy Dep

arted Servants of his family. May their 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.

HYMNS FOR THE DIVINE LITURGY

Troparion for The Resurrection – Tone 6

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body. Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it. Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead, // glory to Thee.

Troparion for The Feast of The Theophany of Our Lord – Tone 1

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, and called Thee His beloved Son; and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truthfulness of His word. O Christ our God, Who hast revealed Thyself // and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee.

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

Troparion for The Holy Glorious Prophet Forerunner and Baptist John - Tone 2

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise, but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for thee, O Forerunner. Thou wast shown in truth to be the most honorable of the Prophets, for thou wast deemed worthy to baptize in the streams of the Jordan Him Whom they foretold. Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy, thou didst proclaim to those in hell God Who appeared in the flesh, Who takes away the sin of the world, // and grants us great mercy.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion for The Feast of The Theophany of Our Lord - Tone 4

Today Thou hast shone forth to the world, O Lord, and the light of Thy countenance has been marked on us. Knowing Thee, we sing Thy praises: "Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, // O unapproachable Light."

THE PROKEMEINON – TONE 1

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us / as we have set our hope on Thee!

THE SECOND PROKEMEINON – TONE 7

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord / and shall hope in Him.

ALLELUIA VERSES

I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation.

For Thou hast said: Mercy will be established forever; Thy truth will be prepared in the heavens.

Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.

THE HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing:)

Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos, more honorable than the heavenly hosts! No tongue knows how to praise thee worthily, O Theotokos; even angels are overcome with awe praising thee. But since thou art good, accept our faith; for thou knowest our love inspired by God! Thou art the defender of Christians, and we magnify thee.

COMMUNION HYMN

**Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance! He shall not fear evil tidings! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

EPISTLE LESSON FOR TODAY

BRETHREN:

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."

(Now this, "He ascended" - what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

IN THOSE DAYS:

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Now the men were about twelve in all. And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

GOSPEL LESSON FOR TODAY

LET US ATTEND:

Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

AT THAT TIME:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'

I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

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=== Scriptural Readings for the Week ===

PLEASE REFER TO THE OCA WEBSITE...www.oca.org

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SUNDAY JANUARY 7, 2024

THE SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Matins – **9:00 AM** Divine Liturgy - **10:00 AM**

Q&A with Fr. Jay and Blessing of Water for Children of our Parish

Coffee Hour Fellowship in Parish Fellowship Hall following The Divine Liturgy

Blessing of Hoyt Lake – 1:15 PM

TUESDAY JANUARY 9, 2024

Daily Matins – **9:00 AM**

Paraklesis Service to The Theotokos – **6:00 PM**

Adult Education Class (Via Zoom) – **7:00 to 8:30 PM**

THURSDAY JANUARY 11, 2024

Akathist to Our Lord Jesus Christ - **9:00 AM**

FRIDAY JANUARY 12, 2024

6:30-9:00 P.M. Parish Family Paint Night

SATURDAY JANUARY 13, 2024

Great Vespers – **4:00 PM**

SUNDAY JANUARY 14, 2024

Matins – **9:00 AM**

Divine Liturgy - **10:00 AM**

Church School Class in Parish Fellowship Hall following The Divine Liturgy

Coffee Hour Fellowship in Parish Fellowship Hall following The Divine Liturgy



Coffee Hour Fellowship is held every Sunday in The Parish Fellowship Hall following the Divine Liturgy. As this is a continuation of The Divine Liturgy itself through Agape and Fellowship, let us come together to enjoy the time as a parish family.

If anyone has any questions about fasting or restrictions when hosting coffee hour, please see Fr. Jason and he will help you and guide you!

When hosting coffee hour, please check the refrigerators in the Parish Fellowship Hall the week before we are hosting to see what supplies we will/may need.

We will also be using real coffee cups for coffee hour. If anyone needs assistance with cleaning them or using the dishwasher following Coffee Hour, please see or contact Mat. Katia.

**If there is no host for coffee hour,
then we will not have coffee hour on that particular Sunday.**

If anyone would like to host coffee hour or has any questions regarding one's preparations for Coffee Hour, please see or contact Mat. Fran (610.698.1666/frances.vansuch@yahoo.com)

FIND YOUR SPIRITUAL HOME In The Orthodox Christian Church

SATURDAY Great Vespers 4:00 PM

SUNDAY Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM (Sept-May)

9:30 AM (May-September)

~ All are Welcome ~

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 or needs and help or assistance, please contact our parish priest: V Rev. Jason Vansuch (jvansuch@hotmail.com) or 716.875.4222 and he will be able guide you.

To visit our parish website, please click on the QR Code below:



Come and See how we are all called to be Stewards of The Church!

- Stewardship is our active commitment to use all our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgment of Christ's redeeming love.
- Stewardship is caring for the needs of others.
- Stewardship is offering one's self to God as He offered Himself to us.
- Stewardship is what a person does after saying "I Believe . . .", as proof of that belief.
- Stewardship is learning how to be a responsible and concerned caretaker of Christ's Church; it is learning how to enjoy Church life and be happy in Church work, for in Her dwells the fullness of the Spirit of God.

If you would like to make a donation to our parish, please feel free to use the QR Code or link to our parish website donation page below. Thank you for your continued support and generosity for our parish in bringing The Love and Faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ to all! May God continue to bless and guide you and keep all of you in His loving care today and always!



St George Orthodox Churc...
@StGeorgeOrthodoxChurch



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MONTHLY HEALING PRAYER SERVICE The Supplicatory Canon Prayer Service to St. Nektarios

MONDAY JANUARY 22, 2024 –6:00 PM



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

ST. GEORGE SENIOR/RETIREE DAY
THURSDAY JANUARY 18, 2024
10:00 am to 12:00 PM

We invite all Seniors and Retirees to come and join us as we spend a morning together in prayer and Christian fellowship!

- A morning filled with prayer, fellowship, education and fun for all of our retired parishioners to come together and spend time together
- Coffee, tea, juice and snacks will be provided
- Held 1-2x a month



ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH (Buffalo, NY)
PARISH OUTREACH MINISTRIES

To the Glory of God, every year our beloved parish family answers The Call of Our Lord of ministering to those in need by fulfilling The Gospel of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ with participating in 5 on-going Parish Outreach Ministries within the local Buffalo Area on an on-going basis and especially during the Nativity Season.

Every year, we look forward to bringing the joy, the love, and the peace of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ to everyone especially through the following the outreach ministries:

Hearts for The Homeless – which is a mobile soup kitchen/thrift shop that feeds the poor and chronic homeless on the street. Characterized by a profound spiritual motivation. The program offers

nourishing food, as well as clothing, pertinent information regarding area services, companionship and hope for the future.

- Each Month we collect a different canned good/non-perishable food item along with hygiene products and drop them off at the Hearts for The Homeless Distribution Center

Buffalo City Mission – exists to meet the spiritual and practical needs of the poor through the demonstration of the love and preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in providing love, care, shelter, food, and other means necessary to those in need.

- Each Month we collect hygiene products, clothing for men, women, and children and drop them off at the Buffalo City Mission Distribution Center

HomeSpace – is a local community organization ministering to local teens and pre-teen moms which provides comprehensive care to 14-21 yr old moms (providing those essential items necessary for caring for their children: diapers, wipes, baby food, clothing (infants through 7/8 years old). HomeSpace Corporation supports at-risk young women to achieve independence two generations at a time.

- Each Month we collect hygiene products, clothing for young women and children along with those essential items necessary for caring for their children: diapers, wipes, baby food, clothing (infants through 7/8 years old) and drop them off at the HomeSpace Distribution Center

Mats for Mission/Resurrection Life Food Pantry – A Local Organization assisting with providing rest mats made out of plastic bags for the less fortunate as well as providing food and other means necessary to those in need.

- Each Month we collect plastic bags as well as canned goods and non-perishable food items and drop them off at the Resurrection Life Food Pantry Distribution Center.
- Beginning in January 2023, our church school children will be volunteering here on a regular basis assisting with collecting and sorting out Food Bags for those in need.

Baker Victory – A Local Organization dedicated to fostering the highest possible quality of life and personal achievement by partnering with children, adults, their families and the WNY community through a diverse array of social, health and human services.

- Twice a year we collect gifts and other essential items necessary for the children and drop them off at the Baker Victory Distribution Center.

****We also support Compass Care Pro-Life Agency and FeedMore of WNY on a regular basis!**

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**MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS YOU AND GUIDE YOU
 FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND PRAYERS!**
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****PLEASE REFER TO THE WEEKLY EMAILS AND PARISH WEBSITE
 FOR CHANGES TO THE CALENDAR!****
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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 (2023)

Reader Victor Shanchuk
 McAuley Residence
 1503 Military Rd.
 Buffalo, NY 14217
 716.881.3096

Mrs. Luba Japadjief
 Elderwood Nursing Home
 104 Old Niagara Rd.
 Lockport, NY 14221 (Room 47A)

Mr. Albert Fadell
 317.376.2562

Nicholas Wityk
 Turtle Rock Road
 Livonia, NY

Mr. Steve Scordalakis
 122 Pennsylvania Ave
 Lockport, NY 14221

Andrew Wityk
 Ellicott Center
 200 Seventh Street
 Buffalo, NY 14201

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH PRAYER LIST

Please remember in prayer Thy Servants of God...

FOR THE HEALTH OF THY SERVANTS:

HIERARCHS

Archbishop BENJAMIN Archbishop ALEJO
 Archbishop NATHANIEL Archbishop DANIEL

CLERGY

Archpriest Herman, Matushka Cynthia and George, Elizabeth
 Archpriest Vladimir and Matushka Jeanne
 Archpriest Alexey and his family
 Archpriest Timmothy/Mat. Michelle
 Archpriest John and Presbyter Nancy
 Archpriest Ken and Matushka Natalie
 Archpriest Andreja, Popadija Anica and Family
 Archpriest Timmothy Archpriest Leonid Archpriest David
 Archpriest John (Onofrey) Archpriest James Archpriest Robert
 Priest Peter and Mat. Mary
 Dn. Sean and Mat. Heather
 Dn. Mark and his family

MATUSHKI Mat. Deborah Popadija Sara Mat. Gayle Mat. Natasha
 Mat. Barbara Mat. Katia Mat. Paraskeva Mat. Joanna Popadia Vicki
 Mat. Patricia Mat. Gloria Christine Coard Karen
 Catherine Ivan/Marina/Inna Bonnie/Silviu Jennifer, Amanda
 Edwina Irene Luba Jim, Darren, Marsha
 Serena/Asma Lillian Reader Victor Nicholas, Andrew
 Marilyn Frank June Theodora Amanda, Chase Ronald, Candice
 Sarah Albert Boris Oscar Billy Clyde
 Xenia, Justin, Danielle, Anne, Patricia Larry Joseph Frank
 Victor Catherine Susan Svetlana Juliana
 Evelyn Robert Rebecca Paul Brian
 Jeanne Angela, Jason, Michelle Linda Justin Frances
 John, Helen Ashley Steven Barbara Daniel
 Joseph, John, Margaret, Thomas, Victoria, Tyler Matthew William
 Melody Natalie, Lorraine Lee, Maribeth Bridget
 Kelly, Robert, Boris, Zaeb, Tirza, Sabas, Sada, Charles, Thlisinitsa,
 Gemmal, Geesa, and Patric Lia/Isaiah
 Olga and Eugene Jeremy Stewart Susan
 Susan Justin Louis Yuri/Elena Alex John, Kevin, Sean
 Anthony Aldona, Melinda, Pam Valerie Mary John Rebecca
 Jaime/Sammy, Juliana Harry James Jake Raphael
 Lee, Benjamin, Harry Patrick Aspasia/Stavros
 Charles Emma/Alexander Elias, John, Joseph, Nadim, Theresa
 Vadym Iryna Yuriy Anastasia Rosemary Anthony
 Seraphim Anthony
 Mary, Hal, Autumn, Ariana, and Amber, Judithann, James, Jeffry, Dominic,
 Douglas, Rachel, Dennis, Edith, Joanna
 Brian John, Roberta, Barbara John, Michael John
 George Costa Jonathan, Kevin, Lary, Carly, Sherry, Mary Jo, Clara, Karl,
 Mary Al and Sophie and Family
 Stephen, Larry, Olga, Olga, Sally, Deborah, David
 Rdr Nicholas, Judithann, Michael, Mary, Cate, Michael, Gary, Damian, Olga,
 Alexandra, Barbara, Damian, David, David Alexander and Bonnie Nadja
 Ron, Illiana, Jillian, Joel, Robert, Susan, Arnold, Kyriaki, Danny, Thomas,
 Amelia, Emily, Kevin/Juanita Sam Anna

Crissy and the child Luke Raphael born of her
 Children of God - Jake, Raphael

Diocese of NY&NJ Prayer List

Archpriest Samuel Mitred Archpriest Joseph Lickwar
 Mitred Archpriest Daniel and Mat. Myra
 Archpriest George Archpriest Paul Mitred Archpriest Ken (*Starevsky*)
 Archpriest Jonathan Archpriest Paul

Those Serving in The Armed Forces

Kenneth, Nadine, Jason, Robert, Andrew, Justin, Shawn,
 Austin, Chris, John, Daniel, Gjorgie, Thomas

Inquirers

Jeremy Ayden Edward
 Rudy and Karen Judy Raymon/ Gina Raymond and Frankie

For All of our Parishioners and their families, the communicants of this holy house, those who pray here, our loved ones and their families and for those who are praying with us today and all of those whom we have in our hearts and minds

For All of our parishioners who are in hospitals, nursing home, and those who are homebound.

For All of the ill-afflicted of our parishes and families especially those affected with the Coronavirus and other ailments and for their continued full recovery and good health

For All of our doctors, nurses, physicians, and medical professionals

For our Nation that The Lord our God will continue to bless us and guide and teach us to love another, pray for one another and forgive one another.

For All of those who are travelling and for their safe journey and return to their homes

FOR THY DEPARTED SERVANTS OF GOD:

For all of those who tragically lost their lives to the Coronavirus and other ailments

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

Metropolitan THEODOSIUS

Ever-Memorable Archpriest Eugene
 Ever-Memorable Archpriest Rastko
 Ever-Memorable Priest John
 Ever-Memorable Dn. Mark

Metropolitan HERMAN

Ever-Memorable Archpriest Bernard
 Ever-Memorable Archpriest George
 Ever-Memorable Archpriest George
 Matushka Dorothy
 Khouria Grace

Priest Leonid Gregory, Priest Peter, Archpriest Kirill, Dn. Michael, John Robert, Sister Thomas, Frank, Jenny, Charles, Florence, Michael Stevens, William, George, Marion

Ever-Memorable Pdn Gregory

Ever-Memorable Sbdn Gregory

Martha, Akhtar, Barkat, Rehmat

Newly-Departed Servants of God

Barbara Gabe Anita Cindy Robert Lynn Francis Thomas

***If anyone would like to have their loved ones added to the prayer list for remembrance during the Divine Liturgy and Divine Services, please see or contact Fr. Jason.**

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.

Also in the Parish Fellowship Hall, we have the Giving Tree! If anyone would like to sign up for Readers, Bulletin, Collection, Communion Cloth, Home Blessing, please see or contact Fr. Jason!



A SINCERE AND HEARTFELT THANKS AND APPRECIATION FOR THE FOLLOWING DONATIONS TO THE PARISH FROM OUR PARISH GIVING TREE

Please be sure to check out “The Giving Tree” in the Parish Fellowship Hall as well as on our parish website (www.stgeorgebuffalo.com) to see how we may be able to donate towards the needs of our parish through our continued support and stewardship for our beloved parish.

Some of the items on the leaves are as follows:

Candles
7-Day Vigil Candles
Flowers for Feast Days
Charcoal
Altar Wine
Cups for Zapifka
Paper Towels Toilet Paper Donation for Office Supplies (Paper, Copier)
Monthly Donation for Health Kits for Mats for Mission
Monthly Donation for Chowder Sale

If anyone has any questions, please see or contact Fr. Jason or Barbara. Thank you for your continued prayerful support and stewardship. May God continue to bless and guide all of you, your families and our entire Parish family and keep all of us in His Loving Care!

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 fine 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!

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!**

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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>!

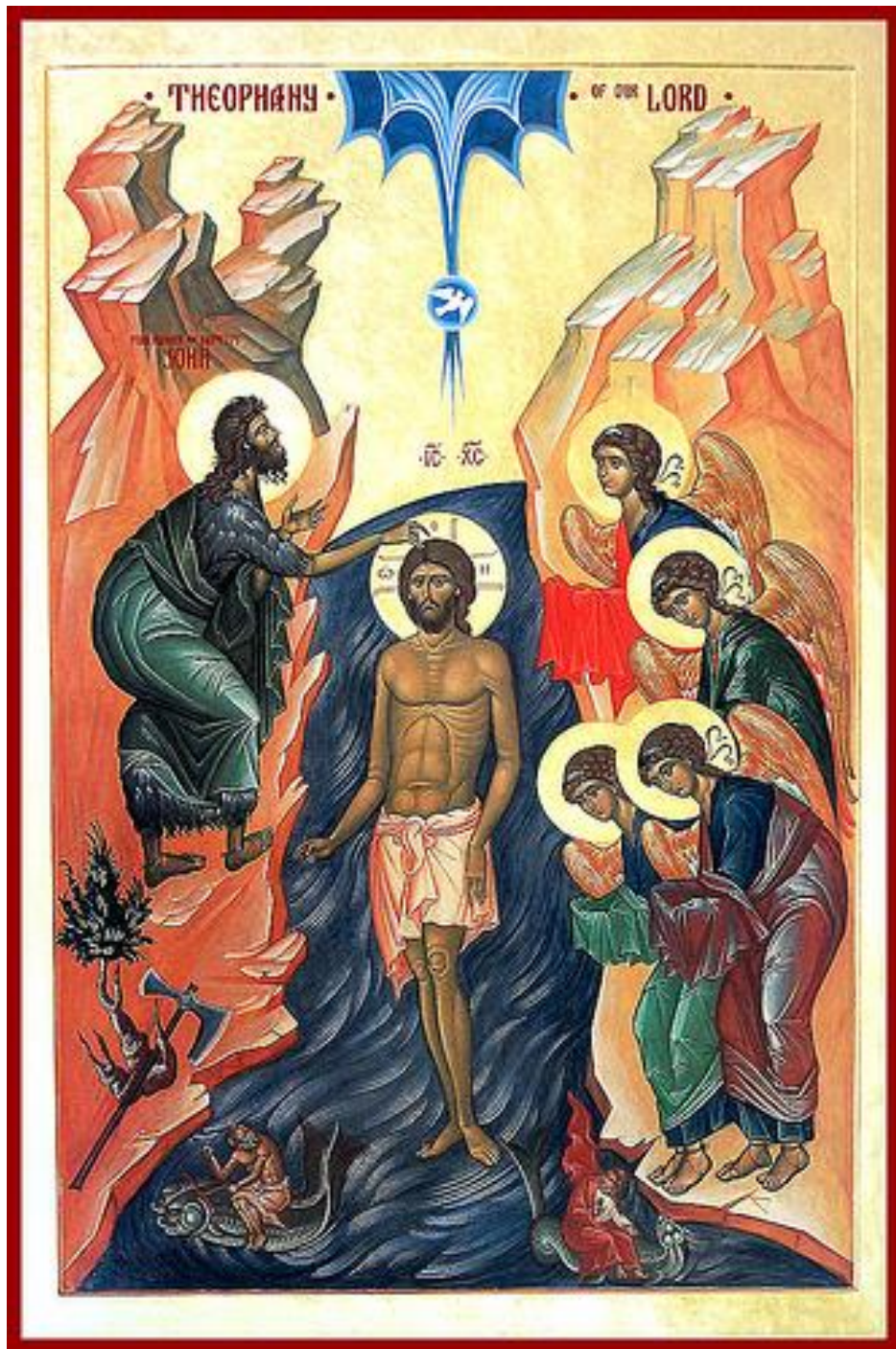
There are videos for each week beginning with The Feast of Feasts – Holy Pascha! Be sure to check them out!

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ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH EDUCATION CENTER

The Feast of The Holy Theophany of Our Lord

January 6



From the first century of the Christian Church, there has always been “The Festival of Lights”. In the depth of Midwinter, this feast celebrated the advent of the Son of God’s coming into the world as Jesus Christ, and His early years up to and including His baptism in the Jordan, which heralded the beginning of Jesus’ ministry on earth.

Over the centuries, the various aspects of Christ’s early years were separated into individual feasts on different days: His [Nativity](#), the Visitation of the Magi, His presentation in the Temple, and His circumcision. But the principal event of the Feast of Lights – Christ’s Baptism – continued to be commemorated on the 6th of January. Why is this event so important?

The event depicted in the icon is that described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke; here is Matthew’s version:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

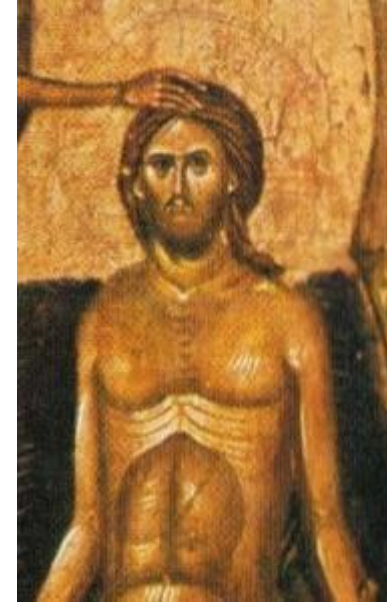
(Matthew 3:13-17)

This, then, is the **Epiphany** (revelation) of the Holy Trinity, otherwise known as **Theophany** which literally means a “*revelation of God*” in Greek (Θεοφάνεια; the Russian is Богоявление and means the same).



John the Baptist, baptizer and worshiper

The paradox that Jesus Christ might be revealed as God through an act of submittal to a mere man, John, is shown well in the Icon. Though John is baptizing Christ, it is the former who is shown bent over in reverence to the latter. In other icons, John is shown with his face turned toward heaven and beholding the miracle of the Theophany; either way, despite being the baptizer, he is not central to the scene. Near to John is a tree with an axe laid at the root, recalling John's own preaching to those who came to him: *"And now also the ax is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."* (Matt 3:10). Present in the icon, this shows that whilst the Baptizer must now "decrease so Christ may increase", John's teachings and role are not done away with now the Holy Trinity has been revealed. On the opposite bank to John the Baptist, angels wait invisibly to receive the newly baptized Christ and clothe Him. And so, on the left is the forerunner of Christ, John, with his sermon of repentance represented by the tree and axe; on the right, the angels wait with reverence to accept the newly revealed Son of God. In the middle – the moment of revelation itself.



Jesus Christ, despite being the one submerged in the Jordan, is shown as though standing up and staring straight at us. His body is depicted as strong and beautiful, as it is understood classically, and in older icons He is naked. Christ appears almost as wide as the river Jordan itself; indeed: it is as though it is Jesus Christ, rather than the river, which cuts a swathe through the rocky wilderness on either side.

The Icon of the Theophany, as well as depicting the Holy Trinity, also answers the question of John the Baptist: *I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?* The answer is in what Jesus does with His hands. Whilst in Western art, like [this painting by Da Vinci](#), Jesus is shown as submitting to John's authority, in Orthodox icons Christ's hands are not shown in prayer, but in a sign of blessing. Rather than the waters of Jordan cleansing Christ, it is Christ Who cleans the waters. This is why in the bottom of most Theophany Icons, little creatures appear to be fleeing from the feet of Christ. This is a reflection

of the words of the Psalmist regarding the Messiah (Christ):
“*the sea saw and fled, the Jordan turned back*” (Psalm 114:3).

This is the depth and profundity of the Baptism of Christ; the feast of lights which revealed the Holy Trinity, and cleansed the waters of baptism so that we, like the fishes shown in the icon, may swim in pure waters.

The Theophany of the Lord Jesus Christ

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.

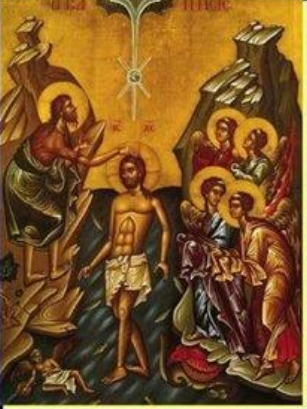
The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, 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.

The Holy Theophany of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ
January 6

The Holy Trinity is made manifest on earth for our salvation.

- St. John the Baptist touches Christ's head, indicating His humanity.
- He also gestures toward heaven with his left hand, indicating Christ's divinity.
- It is not the Baptist who blesses Christ, but Christ who blesses St. John when he puts his hand upon His head.
- Christ is baptized, not because He needs purification, but "to identify Himself with our purification," says St. John of Damaskos.
- Humbly, Christ identifies with mankind, in all our brokenness.
- His has come to earth to redeem us from our sins!
- The voice of the Father and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, reveal Christ as one of the Holy Trinity.
- A dove reminds us of Noah's flood. The moment of Christ's baptism indicates our release from the flood of sin.
- Angels are shown attending to and glorifying the Lord.
- Covered hands and bowed heads show submission to the God-made-man.
- Their response to Our Lord and Savior is what ours is supposed to be, as well.
- A tree bearing no good fruit is shown with an axe, ready to be cut down.
- St. John the Baptist warns us not to be fruitless, saying, "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10).
- What a contrast to Christ's ministry, which produces every good fruit!
- By Christ's baptism, water itself was blessed, becoming water of renewal.
- Fish swim both down and upstream. Why? To show the Jordan River and the seas are turned back, as was foretold in Psalm 113.
- The Jordan is represented as a man fleeing and the seas are symbolized by a sea dragon.



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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.

Synaxis of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

January 7

In the Orthodox Church it is customary, on the day following the Great Feasts of the Lord and the Mother of God, to remember those saints who participated directly in the sacred event. So, on the day following the [Theophany of the Lord](#), the Church honors the one who participated directly in the Baptism of Christ, placing his own hand upon the head of the Savior.

Saint John, the holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, whom the Lord called the greatest of the prophets, concludes the history of the Old Testament and opens the era of the New Testament. The holy Prophet John bore witness to the Only-Begotten Son of God, incarnate in the flesh. Saint John was accounted worthy to baptize Him in the waters of the Jordan, and he was a witness of the Theophany of the Most Holy Trinity on the day of the Savior's Baptism.

The holy Prophet John, the son of the [Priest Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth](#), was related to the Lord on His mother's side. The holy Forerunner, John, was born six months before Christ. The [Archangel Gabriel](#) announced his birth in the Temple at Jerusalem, revealing to Zachariah that a son was to be born to him.

Through the prayers offered beforehand, the child was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saint John prepared himself in the wilds of the desert for his great service by a strict life, by fasting, prayer and sympathy for the fate of God's people.

At the age of thirty, he came forth preaching repentance. He appeared on the banks of the Jordan, to prepare the people by his preaching to accept the Savior of the world. In church hymnology, Saint John is called a "bright morning star," whose gleaming outshone the brilliance of all the other stars, announcing the coming dawn of the day of grace, illumined with the light of the spiritual Sun, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having baptized the sinless Lamb of God, Saint John soon died a martyr's death, beheaded by the sword on orders of King Herod at the request of his daughter Salome. (On Saint John the Baptist, see Mt.3:1-16, 11:1-19, 14:1-12; Mark 1:2-8, 6:14-29; Luke 1:5-25, 39-80, 3:1-20, 7:18-35, 9:7-9; John 1:19-34, 3:22-26).

The Transfer of the Right Hand of the holy Forerunner from Antioch to Constantinople (956) and the Miracle of Saint John the Forerunner against the Hagarenes (Moslems) at Chios:

The body of Saint John the Baptist was buried in the Samaritan city of Sebaste. The holy [Evangelist Luke](#), who went preaching Christ in various cities and towns, came to Sebaste, where they gave him the right

hand of the holy Prophet John, the very hand with which he had baptized the Savior. The Evangelist Luke took it with him to his native city of Antioch.

When the Moslems seized Antioch centuries later, a deacon named Job brought the holy hand of the Forerunner from Antioch to Chalcedon. From there, on the eve of the Theophany of the Lord, it was transferred to Constantinople (956) and kept thereafter.

In the year 1200, the Russian pilgrim Dobrynya, who later became Saint Anthony, Archbishop of Novgorod (February 10), saw the right hand of the Forerunner in the imperial palace. From the Lives of the Saints we learn that in the year 1263, during the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders, the emperor Baldwin gave one bone from the wrist of Saint John the Baptist to Ottonus de Cichon, who then gave it to a Cistercian abbey in France.

The right hand continued to be kept in Constantinople. And at the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the holy relic was seen at Constantinople in the Peribleptos monastery by the Russian pilgrims Stephen of Novgorod, the deacon Ignatius, the cantor Alexander and the deacon Zosimus. When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, sacred objects were gathered up at the the conqueror's orders and kept under lock in the imperial treasury.

In the Lives of the Saints is clear testimony that in the year 1484 the right hand of the holy Forerunner was given away by the son of the Moslem sultan Bayazet to the knights of Rhodes to gain their good will, since a dangerous rival for Bayazet, his own brother, had allied himself with them. A contemporary participant, the vice-chancellor of Rhodes, Wilhelm Gaorsan Gallo, also speaks of this event. The knights of Rhodes, having established their base on the island of Malta (in the Mediterranean Sea), then transferred the sacred relic they had received to Malta.

When the Russian Tsar Paul I (1796-1801) became Grand Master of the Maltese Order in honor of the holy Prophet John, the right hand of the Baptist, part of the Life-Creating Cross and the Philermos Icon (October 12) of the Mother of God (from Mt Philermos on the island of Rhodes)

were transferred in 1799 from the island of Malta to Russia [because of the Napoleonic threat], to the chapel at Gatchina (October 12). In the same year these sacred items were transferred into the church dedicated to the Icon of the Savior Not Made by Hands at the Winter Palace. A special service was composed for this Feast.

Besides the Synaxis of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates his memory on the following days: September 23, [his Conception](#); June 24, [his Nativity](#); August 29, [his Beheading](#); February 24, [the First and Second Finding of his Head](#); May 25, [the Third Finding of his Head](#); October 12, [the Transfer of his Right Hand from Malta to Gatchina](#) (1799).



A Note on Christian Stewardship

Life is given to us through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our commitment to expressing gratitude for this great blessing is seen through our participation in Christian Stewardship by being faithful stewards of The Gospel. Our commitment reveals how we live our faith in the Resurrected Lord. It is in The Resurrection of Our Lord that we receive eternal life and we express our hope in the life to come by our response as Orthodox Christian stewards.

Come and See how we are all called to be Stewards of The Church!

Please 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.

Thank you for your continued support and generosity.

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

What is Stewardship?

Stewardship means making a regular commitment of one's time, talent, and treasure to Christ and His Church

Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God.

Stewardship recognizes that we believe that "every good and perfect gift we receive in our lives comes from above."

Stewardship is a spiritual practice, much like prayer and fasting. And just as prayer and fasting are ways we seek to deepen our relationship with God, so we use Stewardship to turn everything in our lives into an opportunity to grow in our relationship with God.

Stewardship, like prayer and fasting, should be undertaken purposefully and with intention - while giving of time, talent, and treasure when we feel so moved is a good beginning, it can only bear limited fruit. We should set aside portions of our time, talent, and treasure to give to God before we give them to anything else, in the same way that we should plan our prayer and fasting. There will always be times for spontaneous giving, as with spontaneous prayer - but intention is also necessary.

Why be a Steward?

To be a Steward of the Church means being an active participant in the life of the Church - growing in Faith and communion with God and proclaiming that same Faith with every word, every action, and every moment of our lives.

What is Orthodox Christian Stewardship

"It is by offering our blessings back to God that He will be able to continue His forgiving, healing, liberating, empowering, transfiguring, loving ministry through the Church. For God, Infinite though He be, has chosen to work through us, through our gifts, to continue His saving work in the world today." - Fr. Anthony Coniaris

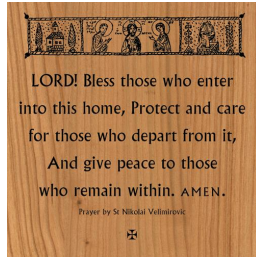
Stewardship reminds us that everything we have has been given to us by God - not for us to have, but for us to care for as stewards, or caretakers. This is why we call those who are actively living the Orthodox Christian life "stewards," because to live the Orthodox Christian life fully means to recognize that we have received everything from God, and therefore we offer some of what we have received back in thanksgiving.

Financial stewardship is an offering, and it is part of how we participate in the saving work of Christ and His Church. By offering back some of what has been given to us, we allow God to work through that offering "for the life of the world." Just as we offer bread and wine for the Liturgy which God transforms into the Body and Blood of Christ to transform us into the living Body of Christ, so do we offer our time, treasure, and talents to Christ and His Church so that God might receive them and transform them into the means not only of our salvation, but for all Creation.



BE SURE TO CONTACT MAT. FRAN REGARDING THE NEW 2024 COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE AS WELL AS SEE IT LOCATED IN THE PARISH FELLOWSHIP HALL!!

**BEGINNING IN 2024 – THE 1ST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH WILL BE POT-LUCK SUNDAY! BRING A FAVORITE DISH OR DESSERT TO SHARE WITH YOUR PARISH FAMILY AS WE COME TOGETHER TO ENJOY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AS WELL AS HONOR ALL OF THE PARISH BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES FOR THAT MONTH! **



HOME BLESSING

HOME BLESSING

BE SURE TO CONTACT FR. JASON TO SCHEDULE A TIME AND DAY FOR HIM TO COME AND BLESS YOUR HOME DURING THE THEOPHANY SEASON!! HOMES WILL BE BLESSED DURING THE THEOPHANY SEASON ALL THE WAY UP TO THE BEGINNING OF GREAT LENT. AS A REMAINDER, WE CAN HAVE OUR HOMES BLESSED ANYTIME THROUGHOUT THE YEAR 😊

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BE SURE TO SEE THE 2024 READER SCHEDULE (Hours and Epistle) SIGN UP SHEET LOCATED IN THE PARISH FELLOWSHIP HALL AS WELL AS ON THE PARISH WEBSITE!! Please see Fr. Jason or Sbdn. Shawn if we are interested in Reading during The Divine Service.

The Blessing of Homes

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 Theophany Season and a Blessed, Healthy, and Happy New Year.