

“THE WEEKLY FORERUNNER” *Our Parish Weekly Bulletin*

O Holy John, Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptizer of the Lord, pray to God for us!

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

Christ is Born! (*responded with: Glory Him!*)

Christos Raždajetsja! (Slavite Jeho!) We are happy that you have joined us today! It is our pleasure to have you in our presence this morning and we wish God’s Blessings to all who visit with us today and hope you stop again soon! Please see Fr. Dave if you have any questions in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy.

UPCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

31st Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday before the Baptism of our Lord
Forefeast of the Theophany
St. Sylvester, pope of Rome (335)



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18 ## STRICT FAST DAY

9:30 Royal Hours of Theophany on the North Side
Vigil Service at
St. John: **5 pm** (211 Cable Ave., East Pittsburgh)
St. Michael: **7 pm** (146 Third Ave., Rankin)
St. John: **7 pm** (450 Glenwood Dr., Ambridge)
St. Nicholas: **7 pm** (903 Ann St., Homestead)

Online **7pm** www.acrod.org/directories/cathedral//live/

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

9:30 Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY GLORIOUS

PROPHET, FORERUNNER, AND BAPTIST, JOHN

9:30 Divine Liturgy

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

32nd Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday after the Baptism of our Lord
Martyr Polyeuctus of Melitene (259)
9:20 am Theophany Canon
9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13
Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Tone 7; Liturgical Color: **Gold**

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Mystery of Confession – Father is available to hear Confessions after every service

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Calendar - Future Services are updated online at:

www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar

(Please see Fr. Dave if you want a printed copy)

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Live-Broadcast – If you are unable to attend church services, please pray along with our Cathedral online:

www.acrod.org/directories/cathedral//live/

RELOCATION UPDATE

*** The Allison Park Church has extended our contract to the end of January

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* **Car accident at the Parish House** – After 2am on Saturday, December 17, an SUV came down Woodland and did not stop until hitting and going into the house. Thank God, no one was injured! It is a miracle that none of the kids having a sleepover in the living room were injured. Due to the severe damage to the house, Josh and his family are displaced. A GoFundMe page has been set up for those able to help them at this time: <https://gofund.me/a34435df>

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** **Insurance Adjustor** – On Friday 12/30, our insurance adjustor did a thorough inspection of the parish house. As we wait for more reports, the following is advised: *no one under the age of 18 should be on the property, *specifically the front entrance and yard are off limits, and *the structure is still sound. As he mentioned after hearing that no one got hurt – *that is a miracle!* Glory to God!

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Contact Fr. Dave or Larry Martin if you are interested in being added to the *Construction Committee*.

May God continue to guide our journey to

2201 Duncan Avenue, Allison Park, PA 15101

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As updates are available, they will be shared here.

Please contact Larry or Fr. Dave with any questions

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Father Dave Urban, *Pastor* +++ 2688 California Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa 15212

www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com +++ 412-748-0148 (*Talk or Text*) +++ OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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*** **Seasonal Greeting** - The greeting used amongst Orthodox Christians for the period from the Nativity until Theophany is “Christ is born!” with the response “Glorify Him!”

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*** **Fast-Free Period** – There is rejoicing in the celebration of the Birth of Christ! The Church reminds us of this as no fasting is required from Jan 7th until Jan 17th. We fasted - now we feast (in moderation). This is a time of joy when the Christ-Child, our Savior, is Born! Enjoy!

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** **THANK YOU** to everyone who brought items in for today’s Nativity Pot-Luck community meal!

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** **Framed Icons** – Please consider framing your previous church calendar tops: cut them out, use a 5x7 frame, and hang them on your walls. Each year you can add an icon to another room in your home. This is also a nice project to do with our youth!

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** **Greeting Cards** – Please repurpose your greeting cards (and if you do not frame them, calendar icons) after the season concludes. The collection box is in the vestibule for the *Holy Transfiguration Monastery*. Thank you for giving back!

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** **Free Health Center** – Join the Neighborhood Resilience Project (2038 Bedford Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15219) for a *Volunteer Information Session* on Tuesday, **January 17** at 6:30 pm. The evening will include a tour, refreshments, and a discussion of the vision for the Free Health Center and how you can play a part. RSVPs requested at freehealthcenter@neighborhoodresilience.org

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*** **Resignation** – This past week Matt Peifer resigned from his position of Vice-President of the Parish Council and his role as cantor of the parish. The hour drive traveling from New Castle caught up to him and it influenced this difficult decision for him. May God grant him many blessed years after his many years of service and stewardship to our parish!

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*** **Pan Orthodox Choir of Pittsburgh** will be rehearsing for the Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers (March 5, 2023 at St George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in Oakland). To prepare, they will have six Saturday rehearsals: January 21, 28, February 4, 11, 25, and March 4. Rehearsals will be held from 12-noon to 2:00 pm at St Nicholas Orthodox Church (320 Munson Ave., McKees Rocks PA 15136). If interested in singing, please contact Fr. Dave.

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** **Winter Retreat** – On Saturday, **January 28th**, St. John the Baptist Church (150 Elmtree Rd. New Kensington, PA 15068) will host a retreat entitled **A Christian Ending** from 9:15 am to 5 pm. *“Dcn Mark Barna and his wife Elizabeth, authors of “A Christian Ending,” will be presenting a workshop talking about practical things that we can do to prepare for our departure from this life and how we can offer funerals that are fully Orthodox, and significantly less expensive than most funeral services”*

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** **The Saint Constantine School** - In 2023, new and exciting developments will come that will help move towards welcoming The Saint Constantine School’s first branch campus in the fall of 2024 - bringing outstanding, classical, Christian education to Pittsburgh’s children. If you are interested in getting more involved, please email pittsburgh@saintconstantine.org. For more info, visit: www.saintconstantine.org/pittsburgh

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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 894
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 113
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 2255
Community Outreach:	\$ 160

Total Collections:	\$ 3422
Capital Improvement:	\$ 10
Relocation Fund:	\$ 100

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 200
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 68
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 410
Community Outreach:	\$ 5

Total Collections:	\$ 683
Capital Improvement:	\$ 40
Relocation Fund:	\$ 5

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Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by Nelson Family; Lawrence Martin; Tim Martin; Kathy Schrmack; Melanie Shuster; Cindy Pavilonis; Eleanor Sanger; Rich and Renee Mirilovich; Patty Watson; Mary Jane Hudak

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On-Line Giving is available from our parish website to donate to the: *General Stewardship Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and/or Relocation Fund.* The best option is to come to church and give your offering to God in His Temple (2nd best is to mail it in to Tim Martin, 2225 McAleer Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143). If you miss coming to church for a week, online giving allows you another option to “catch up” on your weekly stewardship. You can also set up a recurring donation online. For our parish to continue it’s ministries, outreach, and general bill paying, your generosity and stewardship is needed.

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Bulletin Sponsor – If you wish to sponsor a bulletin In Honor of (nameday, birthday, anniversary, etc.) or In Memory of someone, please sign up on the sheet in the vestibule or by contacting Fr. Dave (email, text, or call). An additional stewardship offering to the Church is requested. *Remember, sponsoring a bulletin in memory of someone does not replace having a Panachida (short Memorial Service) for them.*

**** Additional Church Curators Needed –**

A synonym for *curator* is *steward*. Our curator list needs expanded! If anyone is interested in being a *steward of their time* and be “on-the-door”, please see Larry Martin or Theresa Sharpless.

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***** Holy Water Reminders: *Do Not Hoard It!***

While Holy Water does not “go bad”, it is best to refresh your water each year. Holy Water from the previous year(s) should be poured outside (*preferably on the corner of your house or in a garden where people are not going to walk on it*). The best scenario is to **use the water**: take a drink every morning, use in your cooking, etc. We will bless the new Jordan Water on Wednesday. All are encouraged to bring their Holy Water bottle the next time you come to church to refill with the New Jordan Water for your home

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VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE

Diocesan Website: www.acrod.org
Camp Nazareth: www.campnazareth.org
FB: www.facebook.com/acroddioecese
Twitter: twitter.com/acrodnews
YouTube: youtube.com/acroddioecese

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SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

⁵ As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.

⁶ For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

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Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

¹ The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way;

³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight—”

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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LIVING ORTHODOXY

WHY YOU SHOULD LEAVE UP YOUR CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS UNTIL FEBRUARY

To bring cheer to the winter months, follow medieval tradition and keep your Christmas decorations up until February 15/2

This year, why not do as our medieval ancestors did and leave up your festive adornments until Candlemas on February 15/2 (Feast of the Presentation of Christ into the Temple *Old Calendar / New Calendar dates*)?

The theory that it's bad luck to leave decorations up beyond Twelfth Night (around January 19/6) is a modern take on the tradition, but doing so used to be normal practice in the medieval period.

Falling exactly 40 days after Christmas, Candlemas was observed as the official end of Christmas in medieval England. The date itself was a great feast day and is so called because candles intended to be used in churches in the coming year would be blessed on that day. There were also candlelit processions in

honour of the feast.

Evidence that decorations were kept up until the evening before Candlemas is well documented. To this day, Christmas cribs remain in place in many churches until Candlemas, and their removal is described in an early 17th-century poem:

Ceremony Upon Candlemas Eve, Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

Down with the rosemary, and so
Down with the bays and misletoe;
Down with the holly, ivy, all
Wherewith ye dress’d the Christmas hall;
That so the superstitious find
No one least branch there left behind;
For look, how many leaves there be
Neglected there, maids, trust to me,
So many goblins you shall see.

Dr Michael Carter, English Heritage’s Senior Properties Historian, said:

In the Middle Ages, houses would be decorated with greenery for the Christmas season on Christmas Eve day. The feast of Christmas started at around 4pm on Christmas Eve afternoon and continued until the Epiphany on January 19/6.

But contrary to popular belief, the Christmas season actually continues right through to Candlemas on February 15/2 - *so there's no real reason why you should take your decorations down earlier.*

The tradition that it is bad luck to keep decorations up after Twelfth Night and the Epiphany is a modern invention, although it may derive from the medieval notion that decorations left up after Candlemas eve would become possessed by goblins! I’m of the opinion that, after the year we’ve all had, we certainly deserve to keep the Christmas cheer going a little longer!

From: https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/christmas/leaving-up-christmas-decorations/?fbclid=IwAR1oNM0PeX8FXdSOQGHp7QbEkpDZfL_nqVronGabzBAofhyLHHoQ8IyiTBY

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**2023 March for Life press release:
Orthodox Christians Will March for Life Together
on East and West Coasts**

[Orthodox Christians for Life](#) invites the Orthodox community to join the 2023 Orthodox gatherings at the [March for Life](#) on January 20 in Washington, DC, and the [Walk for Life West Coast](#) on January 21 in San Francisco, CA.

Orthodox Christians for Life (OCLife) first organized the Orthodox presence at the annual March 36 years ago in January of 1987, and Orthodox Christians have been gathering together at this event ever since.

"Gathering together at the annual March for Life is vital, not only because it allows the Church's leadership to demonstrate Orthodoxy's uncompromising commitment to the sanctity of human life, but also because it provides an important occasion to bear witness to this commitment to the rest of the pro-life community – an evangelistic opportunity in itself," said Emily Wilkinson, OCLife Executive Director.

2023 SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES:

8:00 am - Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral, 3500 Massachusetts Avenue NW

11:30 am - Meet at the National Mall, corner of 12th Street NW and Madison Drive NW

12:00 - 1:00 pm - March for Life Rally onstage

12:30 pm - Orthodox hierarchs and faithful gather for the Service of Supplication for an End to Abortion

1:00 pm - March for Life commences - Orthodox group will walk and sing hymns

4:00 pm - March for Life concludes at the Supreme Court

Planning and promotional materials for the March for Life and Walk for Life gatherings, along with a full schedule of activities, can be found at [oclife.org/march](#) and [oclife.org/walk](#). Participants can also sign up for text message updates to be alerted of any last-minute changes to the schedule or meeting place.

While the March for Life offers an annual opportunity for proclaiming the Church's pro-life beliefs, Orthodox Christians for Life is dedicated to helping the Orthodox community live out these beliefs during the whole year. Through its Parish Ministry Program, OCLife is actively equipping parishes to become

faithful and loving advocates for the sanctity of life. For more information about OCLife or the Parish Ministry Program, see [oclife.org](#) or email info@oclife.org

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ORTHODOX WORDS OF THE WEEK

THEOPHANY (“appearance of God”) A manifestation of God in His uncreated glory. The revelation of the Holy Trinity at the Baptism of Christ (Luke 3:21-22) is the greatest theophany and is celebrated in the Orthodox Church on January 19/6. It refers also to Christ's resurrection appearances. Other theophanies throughout the Bible include: God appeared to Abraham in the form of three men (Gen. 18:1-15) and to Jacob in a dream (Gen. 28:10-17).

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EPIPHANY Literally, “a breaking through from above.” The word means a manifestation of God. Examples of epiphanies are the burning bush (Ex 3:1-6) and the Transfiguration of Christ (Mt 17: 1-13).

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The Feast of Theophany is also sometimes referred to as Epiphany by English-speaking Orthodox Christians, but that name more properly refers to the Western Christian feast falling on that same day and commemorating the visit of the Magi to the child Jesus.

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MINISTRY OF THE MONTH



This month, through the efforts of our Sr. ACRY, we will be collecting donations for the **Orthodox Christian Network**. (This is the site that Father uses to get the “Children's Word” that is distributed each week.) The Orthodox Christian Network (OCN) is an official agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. **MyOCN is YourOCN!** Visit www.myocn.net to see the variety of materials they provide online! *Thank you in advance for your prayers and offerings this month!*

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE HOLY POPE OF ROME SYLVESTER

Commemorated on January 2

The Holy Pope of Rome Sylvester (314-335) was born at Rome of Christian parents named Rufinus and Justa. His father soon died, and the saint remained in the care of his mother. Sylvester's teacher, the presbyter Quirinus, gave him a fine education and raised him as a true Christian. Having reached the age of maturity, Sylvester set about fulfilling the command of the Lord about service to neighbour, and particularly concerned himself with the taking in of vagrants, offering them in his own house shelter and respite. During a time of persecution against Christians, Sylvester did not hesitate to take in the holy confessor Bishop Timothy, who dwelt with him for more than a year and who by his preaching converted many to Christ. After the Martyr's death of Timothy, Sylvester secretly took up the body of the saint and reverently gave it burial. This however came to the attention of the city-head Tarquinius, and the saint was arrested and brought to trial. Tarquinius demanded him to renounce Christ, threatening him with torture and death. Saint Sylvester was however not intimidated, and he remained steadfast in his confession of faith, and was then thrown into prison. When Tarquinius suddenly died after the trial, the saint was set free and fearlessly he evangelised amongst the pagans, converting many to Christianity. At thirty years of age Saint Sylvester was accepted into the clergy of the Roman Church and was ordained to the dignity of deacon, and then also presbyter, by Pope Marcellinus (296-304). After the death of Pope Miltiades (or Melchiades, 311-314), Saint Sylvester was chosen bishop of Rome. He zealously concerned himself about the purity of life in his flock, and he insisted that presbyters strictly fulfill their duty, and not be overwhelmed with worldly matters.

Saint Sylvester became reknown as a profound expert on Holy Scripture and as a staunch defender of the Christian faith. During the reign of the emperor Saint Constantine the Great, when the periods of persecution had ended for the Church, the Jews arranged a debate about the true faith, at which were present the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine and his mother – the holy Empress Helen, together with a numerous retinue. On the side of the Christians Pope

Sylvester stood forth, and on the side of the Jews – a number of learned rabbis, headed by Zambrius, a magician and sorcerer. On the basis of the Sacred books of the Old Testament, Saint Sylvester convincingly demonstrated, that all the prophets foretold the Birth of Jesus Christ from the Immaculate Virgin, and also His voluntary Suffering and Death for the Redemption of the fallen race of mankind, and His glorious Resurrection. In this verbal confrontation the saint was declared the victor. Then Zambrius tried to resort to sorcery, but the saint obstructed the evil by calling on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Zambrius and the other Jews came to believe in Jesus Christ, and they besought that there be made over them the holy Baptism. Pope Saint Sylvester directed the Roman Church for more than twenty years, and earning deep esteem as a Christian. He died peacefully in old age in the year 335.

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PRAYER CORNER

For the Health of... Gus, Thomas, David, Donna, Gregory, Joshua, George, John, Beverly, Kelly, Paul, Kathleen, Joanne, Marie, Barbara, Brian, Kristina, Sean, Julia, Susan, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, Michael, and Roberta ...*through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer.*

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For the souls of the newly departed...
...*May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May they be Eternal in God's Memory.*

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**A Prayer before consuming
Antidoron and (or) Holy Water**

O Lord my God, may Your holy gift and Your holy water be for the enlightenment of my mind, for the increase of my spiritual and bodily strengths, for the health of my soul and body, for the taming of my passions and weaknesses, through Your boundless mercy, through the prayers of Your Most-holy Mother and of all Your Saints. Amen.

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JANUARY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1 #NATIVITY FAST

9:15 Nativity Canon and Carols (*Kol'ady*)
9:30 Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5 #NATIVITY FAST

9:30 Prefestive Moleben for the Nativity

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6 ## STRICT FAST DAY

9:30 Royal Hours of Nativity
Great Compline (Velikij Povečerije)
7:00 pm in East Pittsburgh (211 Cable Avenue)
in McKeesport (424 Ninth Street)
in Rankin (146 Third Avenue)
8:00 pm in Ambridge (450 Glenwood Drive)
in Homestead (903 Ann Street)
online www.acrod.org/directories/cathedral/live/

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9:30 Divine Liturgy
Parish Family Photo
Nativity Pot-Luck Meal

FAST FREE THROUGH JANUARY 17

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8 – 2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

9:15 Nativity Canon and Carols (*Kol'ady*)
9:30 Divine Liturgy

MONDAY, JANUARY 9 – 3RD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN

9:30 Divine Liturgy

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

Leavetaking (*Apodosis*) of the Nativity of Christ

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

FEAST OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

9:20 Theophany Canon
9:30 Divine Liturgy (and Youth Sunday) followed
by Church School

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18 ## STRICT FAST DAY

9:30 Royal Hours of Theophany

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

9:30 Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

9:20 Theophany Canon

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

ZACCHAEUS SUNDAY

9:30 Divine Liturgy

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AND Looking FURTHER Ahead...

Some 2023 dates of interest at St. John's:

- Feb. 12 – Feast of Three Holy Hierarchs
- Feb. 15 – Feast of the Meeting of Our Lord
- **Feb. 18** – 1st All Soul's Saturday
- **Feb. 27** – The Great Fast Begins (*Services for Great Lent are on the Parish Calendar Online*)
- Mar. 9 – 1st & 2nd Findings of the Head of St. John the Baptist
- **Mar. 1 – Apr. 5** – 6:00 pm Wednesday Evening Presanctified Liturgies
- **Mar. 5** – Sunday of Orthodoxy – 4:30 pm Vespers at St. George Cathedral in Oakland
- **Mar. 11** – 2nd All Soul's Saturday
- **Mar. 12** – Deanery Lenten Mission in Ambridge
- **Mar. 18** – 3rd All Soul's Saturday
- **Mar. 19** – Deanery Lenten Mission in East Pgh
- **Mar. 25** – 4th All Soul's Saturday
- **Mar. 26** – Deanery Lenten Mission on North Side
- **Apr. 1** – Parish Spring Maintenance Morning
- **Apr. 1** – Diocesan Lenten Retreat
- **Apr. 2** – Deanery Lenten Mission in Rankin
- Apr. 7 – Feast of the Annunciation
- **Apr. 8** – Lazarus Saturday

The beginning of Holy Week

- **Apr. 9** – Feast of Palm Sunday
- **Apr. 16** – **Pascha, the Feast of Feasts**
- **Apr. 23** – Cemetery Grave Blessings
- **May 10** – Feast of Mid-Pentecost
- **May 25** – Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord
- **Jun. 3** – 5th All Souls Saturday
- **Jun. 4** – Feast of Pentecost
- Jun. 7 – 3rd Finding of the Head of St. John
- **Jun. 12** – Apostles' Fast begins
- Jul. 7 – Feast of the Nativity of St. John
- Jul. 12 – Feast of Saints Peter and Paul
- **Jul. 23** – Divine Liturgy and our Parish Picnic at "The Cabin" in North Park

Please, Save the Dates!

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AND Some 2023 Camp Nazareth Events:

- ✘ February 17-19 - OCF Retreat
- ✘ March 10-12 - ACRY Spring Encounter
- ✘ March 17-19 - Young Adult Retreat
- ✘ April 28-30 - Religious Education Conference
- ✘ May 1-3 - Sts. Joachim and Anna Seniors Retreat
- ✘ June 9-11 - Family Camp
- ✘ June 11 - Family Day
- ✘ July 23-29 - Pittsburgh Deanery Camping Week
- ✘ August 6-12 - Science & Nature Camp (ages 8-18)
- ✘ October 27-29 - Young Adult Retreat
- ✘ November 10-12 - ACRY Encounter

Please, Save the Dates!

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FEAST DAY FEATURES OF THE MONTH

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Commemorated on January 7 / December 25

The **Nativity** according to the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, also called **Christmas**, is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church.

In the fullness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ was born to the Holy Theotokos and Virgin Mary, thus entering into the world as a man and revealing Himself to mankind.

According to the Bible and to Holy Tradition, Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem in a cave, surrounded by farm animals and shepherds. The baby Jesus was born into a manger from the Virgin Mary, assisted by her husband St. Joseph. St. Joseph and the Theotokos were forced to travel due to a Roman census; the odd location of the birth was the result of the refusal of a nearby inn to accommodate the expecting couple (Luke 2:1-20). Since it is known historically that dwellings were built directly over such caves housing livestock--in order to make use of the heat

Though three magi from the East are commonly depicted as visiting during the event itself (or, in Roman Catholic tradition, twelve days thereafter), the Bible records the coming of an unspecified number of wise men as being a few years after Jesus' birth (see Matthew 2). In either case, these magi came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt 2:11). In the hymnography for the feast, these gifts are

interpreted to signify Christ's royalty, divinity, and suffering.

From: <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Nativity>

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THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD

Commemorated on January 14/1

The Circumcision (Obrezanie) of the Lord: On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ – in accordance with the Old Testament Law, accepted circumcision, which was decreed for all infants of the male gender as a sign of the Covenant of God with the Forefather Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17: 10-14, Lev. 12: 3). Upon the performing of this ritual the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, which had been announced by the Archangel Gabriel on the day of the Annunciation (Blagoveschenie) to the Most Holy Virgin Mary (Lk. 1: 31-33, 2: 21). According to the explanation of the fathers of the Church the Lord, the Creator of the Law, accepted circumcision, giving example for people how faithfully the Divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord accepted circumcision for this reason – so that later on no one should be in doubt that He was truly Man, rather than merely being the bearer of illusion-seeming flesh as certain heretics (Docetism) happened to teach. In the New Testament (Covenant) the ritual of circumcision gave way to the sacrament of Baptism, which it pre-figured (Col. 2: 11-12). Accounts about the feastday of the Circumcision of the Lord in the Eastern Church continue right up through the IV Century. The Canon of the feast was written by the Monk Stephen Savvaites (Comm. 28 October and 13 July). Together with the Circumcision, accepted by the Lord as a sign of the Covenant of God with mankind, He received also the Name Jesus (Saviour) as the seal of His service – the deed of the Salvation of the world (Mt. 1: 21; Mk. 9: 38-39, 16: 17; Lk. 10: 17; Acts 3: 6, 16; Phil. 2: 9-10). These two events, the Circumcision and Naming, remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant (Testament) with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision not done by hand, in putting off the sinful body of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11). The very name "Christian" witnesses to an entrance of mankind into a New Covenant with God.

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THEOPHANY

Commemorated on January 19/6

Theophany / Bogoyavlenie denotes the feast whereby through the Baptism of the Lord the Most Holy Trinity has been revealed to the world (Mt. 3: 13-17; Mk. 1: 9-11; Lk. 3: 21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptised by the holy ForeRunner of the Lord John, 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 that God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death" (Mt. 4: 16) and to save through grace the fallen race of mankind.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptise catechumens at the vespers of Theophany, such that Baptism also is revealed as a spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the feast of Theophany came about in Apostolic times. Mention is made concerning it in the Apostolic Decretals. From the II Century there is preserved the testimony of Sainted Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord and performing the night vigil before this feast.

In the III Century on the feast of Theophany there is known the dialogue concerning Divine-services between the holy martyr Hyppolitus and Saint Gregory the WonderWorker. In the following centuries – from the IV to IX Century – all the great fathers of the Church – Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostomos, Ambrose of Milan, John Damascene, had their own comments about the feast of Theophany. The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this feastday, which even now is sung for Divine-services. The Monk John Damascene said, that the Lord was baptised not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but so that "by water to bury human sin", to fulfill the law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify "watery nature" and to proffer it to us in the form and example of Baptism.

On the feastday of the Baptism of Christ, Holy

Church asserts our faith in the mystery – most sublime and incomprehensible to human intellect – of the Three Persons of the One God. It teaches us to confess and glorify as equally-honoured the Holy Trinity One-Essence and Undivided. It exposes and collapses the fallacies of the ancient pseudo-teachings, which attempted with reason and by human terms to explain the Creator of the world. The Church shews the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires for us 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, wherefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism – keeping clean this priceless garb, about which the feast of the Baptism tells us: "As many as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). *[Translator Note: literally rendered from Greek "Theophany" means "Manifestation of God", whereas "Epiphany" connotes "Manifest upon"; "Theophany" is the more accurate rendering of Slavonic "Bogoyavlenie".]*

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ASSEMBLAGE ("SOBOR" OR SYNAXIS") OF THE FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST OF THE LORD, JOHN

Commemorated on January 20/7

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).

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SPIRITUAL VITAMINS

"Matthew, writing for Jewish Christians, cites Gentiles as the first worshipers of Jesus. Luke, writing for Gentile Christians, cites as the first worshipers the Jewish poor – shepherds from surrounding fields (Luke 2:8-17). The Magi, firstfruits of the Gentiles, come to Christ bearing **gifts: gold**, for a King; **frankincense**, for God; and **myrrh**, for a Man who is to suffer and die. The wise men have received some knowledge about the newborn King through their observation of the star, but when they see Him, they recognize Him as the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), the Orient (the rising sun) from on high (Is. 59:19), the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)." – *From the Orthodox Study Bible: Matthew 2:11*

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"Help one another with the generosity of the Lord, and despise no one. When you have the opportunity to do good, do not let it go by." – *St Polycarp of Smyrna*

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"A most glorious mystery is accomplished today: nature is renewed, and God becomes Man. What He was, He has remained; and what He was not, He has taken on Himself without suffering commingling or division." – *St John of Damascus*

SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Father is available to meet Monday thru Friday from 8:30am to 3:00pm or by appointment.

Online Community: Please email Fr. Dave to receive the weekly bulletin via email.

Parish Phone Tree - Please call Fr. Dave to be added.

Emergency Sick Calls – Please notify Fr Dave when you or a family member are going into the hospital or having a procedure. He will pray with you and you will receive the Mystery of Holy Anointing (Unction) to be fully prepared.

Mystery of Confession – Opportunities are available after every service, most Saturdays during fasting periods from 11am to 1pm, OR by appointment.

Holy Communion/Eucharist – The reception of the Holy Eucharist is encouraged for all Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves, with fasting from midnight on, regular Confession, and forgiveness for all people. Those who are not Orthodox may receive *a blessing* from the chalice.

Lapsed Members – You are always welcome home and we want you back! Generally speaking, sincere participation in the Mysteries of Confession, Communion, and regular attendance at the divine services are all that is required to begin parish life anew! See Fr. Dave for specific details.

Parishioners in “good standing” are those Orthodox Christians who, as members of Saint John’s Orthodox Church, strive to live according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church; participate in the life of the parish through regular attendance of services, regular reception of Holy Communion and periodic Holy Confession (*and receive these Mysteries no less than once a year*); if married, having been married in the Orthodox Church; and share their stewardship of their time, talents, and treasures which includes financially supporting the parish.

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The Jesus Prayer

(Inhale) O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God,
(Exhale) have mercy on me, a sinner!

(Repeat until your heart is calm...)

Baptisms – Two God-parents are required, at least one of whom must be Orthodox by faith (and the other a practicing Christian). In the case of infants, the newly-baptized must have one name that is Christian in origin. Parents/grandparents/guardians must also promise to bring the child up in an Orthodox Christian way of life. Please consult Fr. Dave for more details.

Adult Chrismation – New parishioners are always welcome! In the case of adults seeking entrance into the Church, a period of prescribed catechism will be established with Fr. Dave before administration of the Mysteries. An Orthodox Christian sponsor is also required.

Marriages – are only solemnized on Saturdays or Sundays in the church. They are not performed during fasting periods and certain Feast Days. Please consult Fr. Dave ASAP for more details (*before* arrangements are made for the hall). It is critical that marriages are blessed in the church.

Church Funerals – are provided for practicing Orthodox Christians who are current in their spiritual responsibilities and their stewardship. Otherwise, burial is from the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.

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“The cremation of bodies is not a Christian act. It is a custom of modern times. The body of a Christian has been sanctified with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, and as such may not be burned. God did not create our bodies for burning.” - Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

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PRAYER CORNER

*Our Parish Prayer List for
Special Intentions and Other Needs**

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A Prayer For The Sick:

O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant *name(s)*. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver *him/her/them* from sickness and bitter pain. Heal *him/her/them* so that *he/she/they* may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us. Amen.

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For the Special Intentions of... His All Holiness

Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. David S., Fr. Myron, Dcn. Dean, Michael L., Laura & family, Carlene, Georgia, Eleanora, Mark, Michaleana, Dorell, Donald, Susan, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Ameer, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin *our diocesan seminarians:*

Nicholas, Dylan, Thomas, Samuel, Timothy, Nicholas, Aydin, Subdeacon Seamus, Nicholas, *and our Church Council, Curators, and Relocation Committee:* Lawrence, Matthew, Timothy, Theresa, Rich, Gina, Robert, Jane, Mary Jane, Katherine, Kenneth, John, Wendy, Margaret, John, Patricia, John, Todd *and for those who labor towards our Community Outreaches ...through the prayers of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; St. John the Baptist; the Archangels Michael & Gabriel; and the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.*

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January Namedays:

Juliana Anton – Virgin-martyr Juliana of Nicomedia (1/3)

Stephen Brancho - Holy Protomartyr & Archdeacon Stephen (1/9)

Melanie Shuster - Venerable Melania the Younger (1/13)

John Sharpless - St John the Baptist (1/20)

Ashley Wertz - Venerable Anthony the Great (1/30)

Anthony Winkler - Venerable Anthony the Great (1/30)

...May God grant them many and blessed years!

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January Birthdays:

Carol Lorenzi (1/2), Joshua Mainolfi (1/3), Anna Martellotti (1/4), Steven Buhonick (1/7), Jason Shelpman (1/9), Pañi Kathy Fester (1/13), Brenda Labas (1/15), Fred G. Anton (1/16), Pañi Fedornock (1/16), *Father’s Godson*, Alex Schreiber (1/18), *Father’s Goddaughter*, Jenna Schreiber (1/18), Kevynn Anton (1/19), Patricia Watson (1/19), *Father’s Nephew*, Nicholas Ditmore (1/19), Fr Joseph Fester (1/19), Katherine Schrmack (1/22), *Father’s niece*, Abiageal Verbanick (1/22), Thomas Lorenzi (1/23), Mary Ann Brady (1/26), Fr Frank Miloro (1/26), Roberta ‘Bobbie’ Kruchkevich (1/27), Allison Kretchek (1/29) *...May God allow them to grow in*

peace and love all the days of their lives and may He grant them many and blessed years!

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For our Catechumens & Inquirers... Tyler, Susan *...through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, & St. John Maximovitch.*

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For those preparing for Marriage... Francis & Alexandra, Nicole & Dustin *...through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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January Anniversaries:

...through the prayers of St. Nicholas Planas

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For Pregnant Mothers... Erica (*due in April*), Lindsay, Nicole (*June*) *...through the prayers of St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, and St. Irene Chrysovalantou.*

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For those serving in the Armed Forces & Civil Authorities... Thomas R. Dzadovsky *...through the prayers of St George, the Great-Martyr & Wonderworker.*

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* This is to be used for the special intentions of our brothers and sisters in Christ and can be inserted as a prayer itself into our daily prayers. Please let Fr. Dave know if you wish to make additions or subtractions (*in the case of answered prayers*) to our Parish List. The words of the Gospel are true: **it is good to pray for one another.** Let this be a place where we lay out our concerns and beg the help of our brothers & sisters in Christ. *This prayer list is NOT limited to only Orthodox Christians.*

DEVOTIONAL PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

THE CANON OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Ode 1: Christ

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A prayer for our Neighborhoods

by Archbishop Demetrios of America

I pray to you, God, for the families of my neighborhood. Visit them. Throw their troubles out of them and bring hope. Make the daily cares that devour the heart disappear. Present solutions to life's problems. Settle the disturbed relationships among members of different families whom I know or do not know. O Lord, remind the people of our area that You exist, that You are a strong and loving Protector. Keep away, Lord, anything that causes the disappearance of peace from souls, and the escape of sleep from our eyes. Stay a little while more tonight in our neighborhood. Spread peace along with the night. Let the harshness of the day and its struggles not spread over the night. Amen.

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A Prayer for our Diocesan Clergy

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Bishop *(name)*, and our spiritual father *(name)*, and all our diocesan clergy, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God Who loves us and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving- Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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A Prayer for Peace

Almighty God and Creator, You are the Father of all people on the earth. Guide, I pray, all the nations and their leaders in the ways of justice and peace. Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war. Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war. Lead us to find peace, respect and freedom. Unite us in the making and sharing of tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honor and praise. Amen.

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