

“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 Baptized! *(responded with: In the Jordan!)*

Christos Kreščayetsya! *(Vo Jordani!)* 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 22

32nd Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday after the Baptism of our Lord
Martyr Polyeuctus of Melitene (259)
Sanctity of Life Sunday
Panachida +John Mirilovich (20-yr) and
for aborted babies

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

33rd Sunday after Pentecost; Zacchaeus Sunday
Righteous Maxim, Priest of Tot'ma (1650)
9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15; Gospel: Luke 19:1-10
Tone 8; 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/

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

RELOCATION UPDATE

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

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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

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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*** **Theophany Greeting** - The greeting used amongst
Rusyn Orthodox Christians after Theophany is: Christ
is Baptized! *with the response, In the Jordan!*

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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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*** **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

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

*** **2022 Summary** - If you would like a copy of
your 2022 SJB Donation Summary, please contact
Rich Mirilovich at 412-523-1848 or
jrmrsqrd@gmail.com.

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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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** **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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 **Souper Bowl of Caring** – On
Sunday, February 12th we ask that
you bring in unexpired cans of soup
for our February Community Outreach collection for
Saint Cyril of White Lake Food Pantry at St Mary’s
Orthodox Church on the South Side.

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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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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 74
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 216
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 504
Total Collections:	\$ 794
Relocation Fund:	\$ 50

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

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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.*

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Healthy Snacks – The variety of “grab-n-go” snacks
for our coffee social are getting low. Please consider
bringing in a box of something for us to share.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

⁷But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

¹¹And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ

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Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee

¹²Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; ¹³and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Caper'na-um by the sea, in the territory of Zeb'ulun and Naph'tali, ¹⁴that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ "The land of Zeb'ulun and the land of Naph'tali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—¹⁶the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

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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.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

SAINT POLYEUKTOS

Commemorated on January 22/9

Saint Polyeyktos was the first martyr in the Armenian city of Melitene. He was a soldier under the emperor Decius (249-251) and he later suffered for Christ under the emperor Valerian (253-259). The saint was friend also of Nearchos, a fellow-soldier and firm Christian, but Polyeyktos himself, while yet leading a virtuous life, remained a pagan. When the persecution against Christians started up, Nearchos said to Polyeyktos: "Friend, we shalt soon be separated from thee, for they wilt take me to torture, and thou alas, wilt renounce friendship with me". Polyeyktos answered him, that in a dream he had seen Christ, Who took from him his garb and clothed him in another and bright attire. "From that moment, – said he, – I am prepared to serve the Lord Jesus Christ". Having become ardent in spirit, Saint Polyeyktos went out onto the city square, tore up the imperial edict hanging there about the duty to worship idols, and then he smashed idols from out of the hands of pagan priests carrying them.

His father-in-law, the governor Felox, to whom had been entrusted the carrying out of the imperial edict, was horrified at the deed of Saint Polyeyktos and declared, that for this he had to die. "Go, make farewell with thine wife and children," – said Felox. The wife came and with tears began to beseech her husband to renounce Christ, and his father-in-law Felox also wept. But Saint Polyeyktos remained steadfast in his resolve to suffer for Christ. With joy he bent his head beneath the sword of the executioner and was baptised in his own blood (+ 259). Soon, when the Church of Christ in the time of Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine had triumphed throughout all the Roman empire, at Melitene there was erected a church in the name of the holy Martyr Polyeyktos. Many a miracle was worked through the prayerful intercession of Saint Polyeyktos. In this very church prayed fervently for the granting of a son the parents of the holy Monk Euthymios the Great (Comm. 20 January). The birth of this great luminary of Orthodoxy in the year 376 thus occurred through the help of the holy Martyr Polyeyktos. His memory was also venerated by Sainted Akakios, Bishop of Melitene, a participant of the Third OEcumenical

Council and a great proponent of the Ecumenical Truth. As in the East, so also in the West, the holy Martyr Polyeyktos is venerated as a patron saint of vows and treaty agreements.

LIVING ORTHODOXY

Sanctity of Life Sunday 2023

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful,
My Beloved Children in the Lord,

From the earliest times, Christians have been at variance with the world because of their reverence toward sexuality, marriage, and human life at all its stages. In the post-apostolic Epistle to Diognetus, very possibly from the pen of St. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John the Theologian, we read that Christians 'marry, as do all others; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh' (ch. 5).

Rather than viewing pleasure and fleeting happiness as the supreme good, Christians know that virtue, a rightly-ordered relationship with God and the world which he created, is what leads up toward true goodness, which is God himself. Another word for this right relationship with the Creator is life.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God and incarnate Word came to tear down the dividing wall of hostility between God and man and restore us to our friendship with the Divinity, which friendship had eroded because of sin (Eph. 2:14). Thus he is revealed to be the Life and Light of the world (Jn. 8:12, 11:25, 14:6), the one in whom and through whom we enter into a rightly-ordered relationship with existence and the Source of existence, and who shows us what that relationship—virtue—is, and where it leads—eternal life, eternal relationship with the Lord and his saints.

Life, for Christians, means far more than biological life. And yet this deeper and broader conception of life should only increase our reverence for biological life. For, in Christ, we understand that every human being is created in the image of God, and that every human life is a free gift of the Father, from whom comes every good and perfect gift (Gen. 1:27, Jam. 1:17).

Thus, we understand that there is no opposition between reverence for life and true human flourishing. Or, to cast the matter more bluntly, we

can never accept abortion and infanticide as a solution for other human ills. Rather, we must see the sins of abortion and infanticide as manifestations of the same evils that underlie other social injustices.

This year, Sanctity of Life Sunday has taken on a new meaning. The Supreme Court has undone, as far as lies in its power, the injustice wrought by its decision in the case of Roe v. Wade. But this means that our work in defense and promotion of life is only just beginning.

We know that, as soon as Christians gained a voice in the Roman Empire, that used that voice to speak against the enormities that the Empire committed against human dignity: slavery, gladiator and beast fights, and, yes, abortion and infanticide. As long as we Orthodox Christians have some voice in this pluralistic, democratic society, it is right that we use this voice to defend the weakest among us, including especially the unborn children who still lie under threat of legalized abortion in many jurisdictions.

But we must never, ever allow ourselves to become focused solely on political, and much less partisan and ideological, pursuits. Instead, the defense and promotion of life must start and end with our personal commitment: in our hearts, in our families, in our parishes, in our communities, with alms of time and treasure and talent and effort. With whatever resources God may give us, we must promote true human flourishing, starting with the right to life for all people, at all stages of life. And we must do what we can to orient our life toward God through virtuous living, encouraging the same in our brethren and neighbors wherever and however it is possible. In so doing, we might hope to attain to the everlasting life and bountifulness of the heavenly kingdom, where Christ the Lord reigns with his Father and his All-holy and life-giving Spirit.

Yours in Christ,

+TIKHON

OCA Metropolitan of All America and Canada

PRAYER CORNER

For the Health of... Anna Mae, David, Donna, Gregory, Joshua, George, Beverly, Kelly, 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...

Gus Miller (1/15)

...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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ONLINE BULLETIN BONUSSES

THE FINAL DESTINATION OF DEMONS

By Fr Stephen Freeman

“Final” is not a word you often hear in Christian teaching. Most Christians leave the final things until, well, the End. But this is not the language of the fathers nor of the Church. A good illustration can be found in the Orthodox service of Holy Baptism. During the blessing of the waters the priest prays: *And grant to [this water] the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan. Make it the fountain of incorruption, the gift of sanctification, the remission of sins, the remedy of infirmities; the final destruction of demons, unas-sailable by hostile powers, filled with angelic might. Let those who would ensnare Your creature flee far from it. For we have called upon Your Name, O Lord, and it is wonderful, and glorious, and awesome even to adver-saries.*

What can it possibly mean to ask that the waters be made “the final destruction of demons”?

The nature of the waters of Baptism reveals the Orthodox understanding of the world. These wa-ters, now in a font, are none other than the waters of the Jordan. They are an incorruptible foun-tain and all the things we ask for. They are the final destruction of demons because they are noth-ing other than Christ’s Pascha. The waters of the font are Christ’s death on the Cross and His destruction of Hades. They are the resurrection of the dead.

For this reason Saint Paul can say:

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

The realism of Saint Paul’s teaching on Baptism is

mystical realism (to coin a phrase). These waters become those waters. This event becomes that event. This time is now that time. Christ’s death now becomes my death. Christ’s resurrection now becomes my resurrection.

How utterly and uselessly weak is the thought that Baptism is merely an obedience to a command given by Christ! The idea that nothing happens in Baptism is both contrary to Scripture and a deni-al of the very nature of our salvation.

The anti-sacramentalism (and non-sacramentalism) of some Christian groups is among the most unwittingly pernicious of all modern errors. Thought to be an argument about a minor point of doctrine, it is, instead, the collapse of the world into the empty literalism of secularity. In the liter-alism of the modern world (where a thing is a thing is a thing), nothing is ever more than what is seen. Thus every spiritual reality, every mystery, must be referred elsewhere – generally to the mind of God and the believer. Christianity becomes an ideology and a fantasy. It turns religious believing into a two-storey universe.

The reality of in the Incarnate God was not obvious to those around Him: no surgery would have revealed His Godhood. The proclamation of the Gospel, from its most primitive beginnings (“the Kingdom of God is at hand”), announces the in-breaking of a mystical reality. Many mod-ern theologians misunderstand Christ’s (and Saint John the Baptist’s) preaching on the Kingdom to refer to an imminent end of the age. They hear, “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand,” to mean, “the End of the world is near.”

Thus we have protestant theologians creating an “interim ethic” to cover Christian activity in the “in-between” period – between Christ’s first coming and His second. If the coming of the incar-nate God into the world did not fundamentally alter something, then the preaching of Jesus was in vain and radically misunderstood by His disciples.

The Gospels presume and proclaim at every turn that in Christ, the Kingdom of God is present. Christ says, “But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). There is a mystery at work in the presence of the Kingdom.

Christ makes statements such as that just quoted, but also frequently says that the Kingdom of God has come near. The Kingdom is a reality and a presence that has both come near us, and come upon us. But in neither case does it simply refer to a later “someday.” The urgency of the proclamation of the Kingdom is not caused by the soon approach of an expected apocalypse. Its preaching is urgent because its coming has already begun!

The sacraments of the Church (indeed the Church itself) should never be reduced to “holy mo-ments” or “instances of miracles” in the life of an otherwise spiritually inert world. If bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, then the Kingdom of God has come upon us! And nothing less.

The sacramental life of the Church is not an aspect of the Church’s life – it is a manifestation of the whole life of the Church. It is, indeed, the very character and nature of the Church’s life.

The Church does not have sacraments – the Church is a sacrament. We do not eat sacraments or just participate in the sacraments – we are sacraments. The sacraments reveal the true character of our life in Christ.

This is why Saint Paul can say:

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me. (Galatians 2:20)

I am...nevertheless I...yet not I...but Christ.... This is the language of the mystical reality birthed into the world in the Incarnation of Christ. Thus we can say:

This is the Body of Christ... nevertheless you see bread...but it is not bread...but Christ’s Body sacrificed for you. This is the Hades of Christ’s death and the Paradise of His resurrection...nevertheless it is the water of Bap-tism...but it is not water...but Christ’s death and resurrection into which you are baptized.

And so we see the whole world – for the “whole world is sacrament” – in the words of Patriarch Bartholomew. We struggle with language to find a way to say “is...nevertheless...yet not...but is.” This is always the difficulty in expressing the mystery. It is difficult, not because it is less than real, but because of the character and nature of its reality. Modern Christian thought and language that simply dismiss the mystery and postpone its coming, or deny

the character of its reality, change the most essential elements of the Christian faith and inadvertently create a new religion.

But we have been taught something different. We have been given the Final Destruction of De-mons, the Mystical Supper, the Kingdom of God. Why should we look for something less?

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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!*

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.

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 PRAYERS FOR THE WEEK

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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The Jesus Prayer

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

(Repeat until your heart is calm...)

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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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