

ST. MARK'S ORTHODOX CHURCH
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA (OCA.ORG)
DIocese of Eastern Pennsylvania (DOEPA.ORG)

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Church School Director: Jennifer Sremenak



SUNDAY JANUARY 1ST, 2017
28th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 3.
The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia (379). Sunday before Theophany. Martyr Basil of Ancyra (ca. 362)

Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12; Hebrews 7:26-8:2

Gospel: Luke 2:20-21,40-52; Luke 6:17-23

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Confessions: Saturdays Following Vespers
Also by appointment

Vespers: Saturdays at 6pm

Vigil: Eve of Feasts at 7pm

Divine Liturgy: Sundays at 9:30am
Feast Days at 9:30am

UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS:

Sun, Jan 1: Hours and Divine Liturgy – 9:10am Coffee Hour.
Wed, Jan 4: Akathist -9:15am.
Thurs, Jan 5: Vespersal Liturgy with Great Blessing of the Waters – 9:30am. Vigil for Theophany – 7pm.
Fri, Jan 6: Hours and Divine Liturgy with Great Blessing of the Waters- 9:10am.
Sat, Jan 7: Vespers and Confessions – 6pm.

Names Day

Elliot Seraphim Hamerstone
Charles Basil Bendas
Buddy Basil Rybny

Birthdays

Cecilia Seroka

Calendars: 2017 Calendars are available in the Vestibule, one per family. Please take only one until we are sure all families have gotten one. If there are extras for any reason in a couple of weeks, you make take another.

Church Cleaning: The 2017 Cleaning Schedule is in the Vestibule. Please consider taking a week or two or a month. January is covered. Eleven months to go.

Coffee Hour: We need people to sponsor Sunday Coffee Hour. Please look at the calendar and take a Sunday, on your own or with someone else. The ministry of hospitality is one that reaches beyond the beginning of the Church to the Exodus, where God commands His people to welcome those who come to His

Donations:

In Memory of Constantine and Anna Pachonas, from Patrick and Theresa Bacaris
In Memory of Joseph Horoschak, from son Mark.

Envelopes: 2017 Envelopes can be picked up in the Vestibule. If you don't have envelopes would like to use them for your weekly contributions, there are blank sets. Please take one and write your name and the envelope number on the legal pad next to the envelopes so that the Treasurer can accurately record donations.

House Blessings: All Orthodox Christians should have their homes blessed annually. It is an ancient tradition of our Faith, a rite of renewal and cleansing that welcomes the Holy Spirit in our homes and all they symbolize. Blessing begins on January 6 and will continue until the week before the beginning of Great Lent, this year the week of February 20th. Please note that due to diocesan commitments **Fr. Martin will not be available for house blessings the week of January 22nd to the 29th**. Some have already scheduled. Speak with Fr. Martin in the next weeks or he will call you.

80th Novogodny Ball will take place on Sunday 1/15/17 for the benefit of St. Tikhon's Summer Youth Camp & other deserving charities. For info & reservations call Paul Fedoronko at 610-328-6911 or email novogodnyball@verizon.net

Scrip: Profits for the 2016 \$1834.08! Thank you to all who have participated this past year and made it possible for the sisterhood to support Church School and other ministries of our Church.

Theophany: This week, Thursday and Friday, we will celebrate the Great Feast of Theophany with Vespers Liturgy and Great Blessing of the Waters Thursday morning and Vigil Thursday Evening and Hours, Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of the Waters on Friday morning. Please make every effort to be here for one or the other service.

Vigil Lights

From the Swan Family

For the Health of: Swan Family, Love Family

In Memory of: Thomas O. Swan Jr.

From Alan Lee Litvin

For the Health of: Tara Litvin-Ring,

Phyllis Fitzgerald

In Memory of: Amelia Litvin, Samuel Litvin

Shane Litvin

Epiphany (edited) – Fr. Thomas Hopko.

<https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-year/epiphany>

The sixth of January is the feast of the Epiphany. Originally it was the one Christian feast of the “shining forth” of God to the world in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. It included the celebration of Christ’s birth, the adoration of the Wisemen, and all of the childhood events of Christ such as His circumcision and presentation to the temple as well as His baptism by John in the Jordan. There seems to be little doubt that this feast, like Easter and Pentecost, was understood as the fulfillment of a previous Jewish festival, in this case the Feast of Lights.

Epiphany means shining forth or manifestation. The feast is often called, as it is in the Orthodox service books, Theophany, which means the shining forth and manifestation of God. The emphasis in the present day celebration is on the appearance of Jesus as the human Messiah of Israel and the divine Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in the baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus identifies Himself with sinners as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1.29), the “Beloved” of the Father whose messianic task it is to redeem men from their sins (Lk 3.21, Mk 1.35). And he is revealed as well as One of the Divine Trinity, testified to by the voice of the Father, and by the Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the central epiphany glorified in the main hymns of the feast:

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee his Beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his Word. O Christ our God, who hast revealed Thyself and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee (Troparion).

Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, and Thy Light, O Lord, has shone on us, who with understanding praise Thee: Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, O Light Unapproachable! (Kontakion).

The services of Epiphany are set up exactly as those of Christmas, although historically it was most certainly Christmas which was made to imitate Epiphany since it was established later. Once again the Royal Hours and the Liturgy of Saint Basil are celebrated together with Vespers on the eve of the feast; and the Vigil is made up of Great Compline and Matins.

The prophecies of Epiphany repeat the God is with us from Isaiah and stress the foretelling of the Messiah as well as the coming of His forerunner, John the Baptist:

Once more special psalms are sung to begin the Divine Liturgy of the feast, and the baptismal line of Galatians 3.27 replaces the song of the Thrice-Holy. The gospel readings of all the Epiphany services tell of the Lord’s baptism by John in the Jordan River. The epistle reading of the Divine Liturgy tells of the consequences of the Lord’s appearing which is the divine epiphany.

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds (Titus 2.11–14).

The main feature of the feast of the Epiphany is the Great Blessing of Water. It is prescribed to follow both the Divine Liturgy of the eve of the feast and the Divine Liturgy of the day itself. Usually it is done just once in parish churches at the time when most people can be present. It begins with the singing of special hymns and the censing of the water which has been placed in the center of the church building. Surrounded by candles and flowers, this water stands for the beautiful world of God’s original creation and ultimate glorification by Christ in the Kingdom of God. Sometimes this service of blessing is done out of doors at a place where the water is flowing naturally.

Following are three readings from the Prophecy of Isaiah concerning the messianic age:

After the epistle (1 Cor 1.10–14) and the gospel reading (Mk 1.9–11) the special great litany is chanted invoking the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the water and upon those who will partake of it. It ends with the great prayer of the cosmic glorification of God in which Christ is called upon to sanctify the water, and

all men and all creation, by the manifestation of his saving and sanctifying divine presence by the indwelling of the Holy and Good and Life-creating Spirit.

As the troparion of the feast is sung, the celebrant immerses the Cross into the water three times and then proceeds to sprinkle the water in the four directions of the world. He then blesses the people and their homes with the sanctified water which stands for the salvation of all men and all creation which Christ has effected by his “epiphany” in the flesh for the life of the world.

Sometimes people think that the blessing of water and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it over everyone and everything is a “paganism” which has falsely entered the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God in the Old Testament, and that in the Christian Church it has a very special and important significance.

It is the faith of Christians that since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has been immersed in the streams of the Jordan, all matter is sanctified and made pure in Him, purged of its death-dealing qualities inherited from the devil and the wickedness of men. In the Lord’s epiphany all creation becomes good again, indeed “very good,” the way that God Himself made it and proclaimed it to be in the beginning when “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen 1.2) and when the “Breath of Life” was breathing in man and in everything that God made (Gen 1.30; 2.7).

The world and everything in it is indeed “very good” (Gen 1.31) and when it becomes polluted, corrupted and dead, God saves it once more by effecting the “new creation” in Christ, his divine Son and our Lord by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Gal 6.15). This is what is celebrated on Epiphany, particularly in the Great Blessing of Water. The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world—through its “prime element” of watering the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ and the Spirit. It tells us that man and the world were indeed created and saved in order to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19), the “fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1.22). It tells us that Christ, in Who in “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,” is and shall be truly “all, and in all” (Col 2.9, 3.11). It tells us as well that the “new heavens and the new earth” which God has promised through His prophets and apostles (Is 66.2; 2 Peter 3.13; Rev 21.1) are truly “with us” already now in the mystery of Christ and His Church.

Thus, the sanctification and sprinkling of the Epiphany water is no pagan ritual. It is the expression of the most central fact of the Christian vision of man, his life and his world. It is the liturgical testimony that the vocation and destiny of creation is to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19).