



THE LIGHT

The Nativity of the Theotokos
Greek Orthodox Church
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FROM THE DESK OF FATHER JOHN

The Orthodox Christian Service of the Blessing of the Waters “What do you mean by this service?”

This was the question that little Israelite children were taught to ask at the Passover seder ritual (Exodus 12:36). This same question we too should ask in the month of January as we celebrate the Baptism of Christ. Through the liturgies of Epiphany and the blessings of homes, we also re-celebrate our own baptisms, which are simply reenactments of His baptism.

In the early church the feast of Epiphany (also called Theophany) was THE big holy day apart from Pascha; Christmas as we know it was not celebrated at first. But the commemoration of Christ's baptism was observed, and with grand festivities. Nowadays we hang up our lights for December 25, but in the early centuries January 6 was the Feast of Lights, when candles and lamps were hung aloft in joyous remembrance. Christ's baptism was a theological gold mine, and one of the few events that all four Gospels recount (whereas the birth of Christ is found only in two—Matthew and Luke).

The Gospels paint a fairly simple picture of the scene. Jesus Christ enters the Jordan River with John the Baptist; He is immersed in its flow. As He comes out of the waters. A dove descends, and voice of approval resounds from the skies. The significance of these details is not apparent at first reading. It might seem perhaps like just another extraordinary day in an extraordinary life.

But to comprehend the deeper meaning, you must cast your mind back to the book of Genesis. There we read of how God made all things, drawing forth the Creation from a dark and watery Chaos. We read then of how the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. Here the verb in Hebrew connotes the behavior of a mother bird brooding over her nest, protecting and nurturing her offspring. The Spirit of God at the creation was caring for the young world like a hen over her chicks.

Day by day the Lord shaped and developed His world, forming the light, the heavens, the oceans, and the dry land, as homes respectively for the stars, the birds, the fish, and the animals. And finally, as the crown of His creation, He formed man. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” speaks the Triune Godhead. And resting from His work, the Lord pronounces His approval on the brand new heaven and earth, “And behold, it was very good.”

But this world fell into brokenness and disharmony through the sin of our first parents. The Lord could have destroyed humanity and all His creation with them. He could have let it all slip back into the dark watery chaos from which it came back in the time of Noah's flood.

But this was not His will. His desire is to redeem His world, to transform this universe into a new heaven and a new earth. And this He would do by joining His imperishable nature to our broken and perishable nature, so that we might live with Him in harmony forever.

What we see of Epiphany then, is a restaging of the creation—the Spirit hovering like a mother bird, in the form of a dove, the approval of the Father thundering from the open heavens, and out of the dark waters emerges the new creation. But this time God starts from the end and works backward! The first being to emerge from the waters is a man—the incarnate God—Jesus Christ. And so it begins—the healing of our nature, the re-harmonization of all creature, the reconciliation of all living things to God. In time the New Creation will embrace the whole universe.

See Father, page 7

Father John C. Katsoulis, Parish Priest 540-645-1427 fr.john_katsoulis@verizon.net
 FATHER'S OFFICE HOURS—TUESDAY—FRIDAY 9 A.M.—3 P.M. OTHER HOURS BY APPOINTMENT
 CHURCH EMAIL: nativityofthetheotokos@verizon.net WEBSITE: www.nativity.va.goarch.org
 FACEBOOK: NTGOC Friends

PARISH COUNCIL

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SACRAMENTS IN DECEMBER**MEMORIALS**

His Grace Bishop George

Georgios Georgitzikis, beloved father of Martha Harrison

Metropolitan Silas

Rita Marie Rafael, beloved sister of Father Nick Rafael, Jr.

Vasiliki Eva C. Topping, beloved member of our community

PASTORAL GUIDELINES

WEDDING Marriages are not performed on fast days, during fasting seasons, or on the feasts of the church, specifically September 14 (Exaltation of the Holy Cross), December 13-25 (Nativity), January 5 & 6 (Theophany), Great Lent and Holy Week, Pascha (Easter), Pentecost, August 1-15 (Dormition Fast and Feast), and August 29 (Beheading of St. John the Baptist) Exceptions can only be made with the permission of the respective hierarchy.

BAPTISM A person who wishes to sponsor a candidate for Baptism or Christmation must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing and a supporting member of an Orthodox parish. A person may not serve as a god-parent if the Church has not blessed his or her marriage, or, if civilly divorced, he or she has not been granted an ecclesiastical divorce, or for any other reason he or she is not in communion with the Orthodox Church. Baptisms may not be performed from Christmas Day through the Feast of Theophany (December 25-January 6), during Holy Week, or any of the Great feast days of the Lord.

FUNERAL Funeral services are permitted on any day of the year, except for Sundays, and Holy Friday, unless permission is granted by the Archbishop or Metropolitan.

MEMORIAL Memorial services may not be chanted from the Saturday of Lazurus through the Sunday of Thomas, or any Feast days of the Lord or the Theotokos.

January 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
		9 A.M. Liturgy	A HAPPY NEW YEAR			6:30 P.M. Vespers
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
8:30 A.M. Orthos 9:30 A.M. Liturgy Epiphany	9 A.M. Liturgy					Fencers Hall Rental
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
8:30 A.M. Orthos 9:30 A.M. Liturgy General Assembly Vasilopita Cutting	7 P.M. FRC Meeting			9 A.M. Liturgy		Fencers Hall Rental
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9 A.M. Orthos 10 A.M. Liturgy					9 A.M. Liturgy Hall Rental	
27	28	29	30	31		
9 A.M. Orthos 10 A.M. Liturgy			9 A.M. Liturgy			

ALL ORGANIZATIONS: Please make sure you consult the *Master Calendar*, in the church office, and contact Father, before scheduling any meetings or events.

Thank you!

IN THE NEWS

CHURCH BOOK STORE

Monica Hicks has graciously accepted the role as bookstore director. The bookstore will be operational next month, carrying items such as books, icons, and small gifts. Other items may be special ordered. In addition, 2013 *Liturgical calendars may be picked-up in the bookstore!*

COFFEE HOUR

If you would like to host a coffee hour, or schedule a memorial, please contact Father at 540-548-2665 or fr.john_katsoulis@verizon.net.

PROSFERO MINISTRY

This new ministry is a chance for people to learn to make the prosfero and provide it for the church. Don't bake? No problem! We will teach you. Please contact Presbyteria Stacy for further information and class sign-up.

ATHENIAN DANSE TROUPE

There will be no dance practices in January. Practices will resume in February and be held on Sundays after coffee hour. If your child would like to participate, please come to the first practice on Sunday, February 3.

HALL RENTAL

Please spread the word about our rental capabilities! Complete rental information and contracts can be found on our website. New brochures will be available in January.

HOUSE BLESSINGS

It's that time of year again! If you would like to have your house blessed during the epiphany season, please contact Fr. John to make an appointment. Remember, Great Lent begins March 18, and we'd like to have the blessings done by then.

GOYA

Put January 13 on your calendar as the next meeting date! We have many important topics to discuss.

VASILOPITA

Since Epiphany and the Great Blessing of the Waters fall on the first Sunday of January, we will have the cutting of the Vasilopita on Sunday, January 13 instead. Please remember to bring your Vasilopitas then.

NEW CONTACT EMAIL

If you would like to receive your 2012 stewardship statement electronically, please send an email stating so to pctreasure@verizon.net. This should be used for any church business regarding stewardship, etc.



Summer 2013 Programs

Summer Travel Camp (Session 1) :

June 23 - July 12, 2013

Byzantine Venutre (Session 2) :

July 20 - August 8, 2013

**Both Sessions are open to campers who have completed grades 8 through 12*

Ionian Village Spiritual Odyssey Pilgrimages

Spiritual Odyssey: Cyprus and Crete:

May 30 – June 9, 2013

**Spiritual Odyssey is open to young adults
ages 19-28*

CROSSROADS 2013 PROGRAM DATES

June 22—July 1

And

July 8—July 18

For more info and to apply
go to www.hchc.edu/studentlife/vocation/crossroad

STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE CARD HONOR ROLL

Shown below is a list of families & individuals who are participating in The Nativity of the Theotokos Stewardship Program as of November 25, 2012. We would like to thank all of these families and individuals for responding to the needs of our parish.

If you have not completed your Stewardship Pledge Card for 2012, please complete one and give it to James Malamas or Maxine Calamos or seal it in an envelope, write "Stewardship Pledge Card" on the outside and place it in the collection tray. Stewardship Pledge Cards can be found on the table in the Narthex.

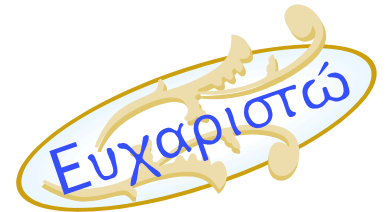
If we misspelled your name, or left you off the list, it was unintentional and please accept our apologies.

Please feel free to see James Malamas or Maxine Calamos with any questions.

Fr. John & Pres. Stacy Katsoulis
Ladies Philoptochos Society
Kyriacos & Yiannoulla Adamou
Robert & Irene Akers
Mikelian & Ornela Bizhyti
Stephanie Blais
Mary Booth
Nancy Breckenridge
Kevin & Chrysoula Brickey
Maxine Calamos
Michael & Angelina Campbell
Richard & Maria Centers
Maria Christoforatos
Kostas & Sophia Constantine
Leonard Cowherd
Daniel & Andrea Domicini
Paul & Hannah Fallon
Helen Frazier
Carl & Christine Fulmore
Angela Georges
Julia Getsos
Jimmy & Katherine Giannopoulos
Steve Giannopoulos
Theofilos Giannopoulos
Pauline Gorton
Linda Govenides
Thomas Harris
Anthony & Kai Hatzis

Bill & Stella Kaltsounis
Phillip & Monica Hicks
George & Georgia Kapataidakis
Voula Kapataidakis
Kosta & Chryse Kartoudi
George Kartoudi
George & Christy Katsourakis
Michael & Katherine Klezaras
Demetrios & Robin Kydonieus
John Kyranos
Adam & Anthoula Makrinos
James & Koula Malamas
John & Maria Manolis
Gino & Marika Marchico
Judy Marrs
Daniel & Cynthia Miller
David & Mary Moody
Phil & Jane Moore
Robert & Barbara Morrison
Peter & Liz Moutsatson
Elena O'Donoghue
Christos Papanastasiou
George Papantoniou
Aslanis Pappas
Stamo Poulos
Georgia Pournaras
Mitchel & Georgia Raftelis
Christopher & Yvonne Rigopoulos
Steve Salagaras
Halina Schreckinger
Demetrios Serakos
Wayne & Liz Skinner
James & Christina Smith
Alin & Andreea Son
Katherine Soulis
Michael & Maria Stafford
Mary Stram
Carrie K. Swann
Stefan & Niki Theodore
Georgia Liakakis Tidler
Vasili & Helen Troupos
Denzil & Evangelia Willis
Bill & Sandy Winkler
Joseph & Maria Winslow
John & Ellen Xydias
Chris & Darlene Yiasemides
Eleni Yiasemides
Harry & Maria Yiasemides
Vicki Yiasemides
Paul & Martha Ziegenfuss

"Stewardship is our active commitment to use ALL our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love."



"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

2013 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival Topics

Junior Division (Grades 7–9)

1. Considering the Lord's words to His disciples, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35), discuss the relationship between service and leadership.
2. Discuss the importance of participating in the life of the Church in light of Jesus's teaching in John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches."
3. In the Resurrection Service, the priest proclaims, "Come receive the light." Discuss the place of light in the Orthodox Tradition.
4. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23). Discuss how we can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, produce this fruit in our lives.
5. In Psalm 103/104, God's care for the natural world is praised. Select elements from the psalm and discuss how they may help us "grow" in our Faith.

Senior Division (Grades 10–12)

1. The Prophet Micah says, "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Discuss how this passage has inspired many Christians to acts of service.
2. In 313 AD, St. Constantine the Great proclaimed the Edict of Milan, which allowed Christians to practice their faith freely. What did religious freedom mean then, and what does it mean for people of faith today in countries where violent religious persecution occurs?
3. Discuss the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian in light of today's culture.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim

Lord and Master of my life, cast away from me the spirit of

Laziness, idle curiosity, love of power and vain talk.

But grant me, Your servant, the spirit of moderation, humility, patience and love.

Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults and not to judge my brothers and sisters.

For You are blessed forever. Amen.

4. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Social websites, apps, and so on are

constantly present in our lives, making it easy for us to share bits and pieces of our lives with many people. How do you "let your light so shine" using these widely available social and other media?

5. "Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments." (Psalm 118/119, verse 73). Discuss how this passage can guide us in a time when we constantly seek to alter the way we look, act, and live.

ATHENIAN DANCERS IN THE SPOTSY CHRISTMAS PARADE



From Father, page 1

“For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.” (Colossians 1:19-20) This is the meaning of the baptism of Christ. And this is the meaning of our baptisms as well. For God chooses to populate His new world one person at a time, by drawing us out of the water together with Christ and citizens of the new creation with Him. But just as baptism is the first step and not the last in God’s plan of re-creation, so to for our spiritual lives.

Think of your parents or grandparents on Ellis Island. They were in American but not yet Americans. They had a choice—they could press on through hardship to win their citizenship in the new world, or they could turn around and get back on the ship that brought them.

Baptism is our Ellis Island. It brings us into the kingdom of God, but much, much is required for us to become real citizens there. In the wake of the feast of Epiphany, when you receive the waters of Agiasmo, the waters of chaos turned into the waters of life, the waters of the new creation. When you bring it into your houses and businesses and offices for drinking and for sprinkling, you declare your intention to become a part of the new creation yourself and to bring your family and your home and your work into the kingdom of God, which makes all things new. It is an ongoing commitment that is to be renewed yearly and even daily.

When you receive the spray of divine presence that comes from the River Jordan through the Holy Water, you declare your intention to live no longer as a citizen of this world, according to its customs and habits, according to the laws of survival and self advancement and pride. You declare your desire to live as a citizen of the new world, according to the rule of love, of mercy and justice and humility before God and man.

This is the meaning of the service we do at Epiphany and in the house blessings of January. It is our Christian Fourth of July, our Declaration of Independence, our acceptance of Christ as our way of life and our commitment to following our leader and king into the new creation of God.

Father Mark Sietsema

GOYA HELPS SERVE THANKSGIVING DINNER AT MILL PARK TERRACE





THANK YOU!